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OR,

A Madman's Confession.







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*A NOVEL.*

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By JAMES CARY.

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*TO MY MOTHER:*

*To whom I owe all that I am, I affectionately  
dedicate this book.*







## PREFACE.

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The author feels assured of the fact that no work has ever been accomplished in the field of fiction with more reverses and disadvantages attending it than has this little book.

He was engaged as locomotive fireman upon a fast express train during the writing of it, only having a few hours at a time to devote to it, and then often tired and sometimes nearly exhausted.

The hardships and the many little reverses incidental to "life upon the rail" affords little time and still less inclination to draw upon the imagination.

The man employed in the train or locomotive service must keep his mind upon his business when on duty, or he is sure to commit some fatal error; and he who has not that peculiar power of



concentration of thought will sooner or later learn that he lacks that attribute which renders him fit for the business.

Considering this a vital point or element in the man who has so much property and so many lives entrusted to his care, the author has never dared to think of his book while upon duty. Therefore the plotting and the writing were to a great extent done simultaneously.

The author has sought to avoid the vitiating influence so often exerted in the current fiction of the day, which makes heroes of demons and the youth a slave to love.

Believing that the influence of true affection is to ennoble and purify, he has sought to make no one a hero who is undeserving.

The author has tried to depict the true woman as God's noblest work and to whose influence man should ascribe all the distinction and greatness to which he has ever attained.

To those who may feel disposed to criticise, he begs to invite attention to the disadvantage under



which the book has been written, and asks them to remember that it is easier to criticise than to write what cannot be criticised. If there be any whose resolutions to a nobler and higher life be inspired by the perusal of this book the author shall feel his labor has not been in vain.

Most respectfully,

JAMES CARY.







## CHAPTER I.

CLIFTON STEADMAN was reared partly in the city and partly in rural districts. He was eccentric in his disposition. He had few companions that he loved, and during his early life had but few friends. This was attributable to his peculiarity, and there were very few who understood him. His eccentricity was often an approximation to rudeness, when judged by the stranger or by those who took no pains to study the intent or real purpose of his life. He preferred the companionship of his mother to that of all others, and experienced little pleasure in childish sports.

The earliest years of Clifton's life were passed in a lovely country village. The house in which he was born was ancient in appearance but costly, and was a palace in the days of its construction. It was the home where his father was born and reared, and had been the inheritance of William



G. Steadman, Clifton's father, from Dorian Steadman, grandfather of Clifton. There was something about this old place that made it very dear to all who ever claimed it as home.

The large and beautiful lawn that surrounded it was thickly covered with Bermuda grass, and two large and beautiful fountains were situated, one to the right and the other to the left of the walk which led from the house to the lawn gate.

In the spring and summer time, when the honeysuckle and ivy made a thick foliage about the spacious arbors which stood around, these fountains were a most delightful retreat for one wearied with the summer heat. The spray of these fountains was thrown from rotary jets and fell back into a large reservoir, which was filled with various species of the finny tribe, and always fed by the hand of Clifton.

This old home of William G. Steadman, though ancient and somewhat dilapidated in external appearance, was furnished in an ostentatious manner. There were life-sized portraits of many



members of the Steadman family hanging about its walls. The furniture was large and costly, being made of rosewood and mahogany. The center table in the reception room was more costly than a full set of furniture in most of the homes of the rich in our present time. It was circular in shape and supported by richly carved figures of dragons, and this support rested upon the head of the Gorgon Medusa. But this old home with all its costly heirlooms, and all of its various attractions was soon to be visited with disaster and shrouded in the greatest gloom.

William Steadman possessed a large estate, most of which had been inherited from his father. He succeeded not only in maintaining these great possessions, but by his successful financiering he had added to his fortune till he had become one of the wealthiest men in the district in which he lived. He never made an investment but what was attended with the greatest success. In fact in matters of financiering and speculation he was sought by all for advice, and his counsel and



advice were always attended with success by its recipients.

Mr. Steadman, unlike most men of such vast fortune, was very charitable to the poor. When he heard of the sickness of any of his employés he visited them and always took them some delicacy from his own table, and always left them lighter hearted and more cheerful. He was a genuine type of an affable, Christian gentleman. No one ever went to him in distress and was sent away empty. He had but one fault, if such it might be termed, and that was an unbounded confidence in the integrity of men. He considered all men honest until they proved themselves to the contrary, and it was this confidence and his kind and generous disposition that brought serious disaster and misfortunes to him.

He had been persuaded to give his endorsement to a note for a large sum of money, and upon the maturity of this note, by the insolvency of those whom he had endorsed, the payment was demanded from him. This ruined him financially.



Mr. Steadman felt that his misfortune was more than he could bear, and he felt that it would be impossible for him to tell his wife about it; yet he knew that sooner or later she must know it. Having returned from the city of Gunville, where he had received the sad information of his great loss, he entered his home and found Mrs. Steadman in her usual happy frame of mind. But as she met him at the door she observed a great change in his expression which had always been bright and joyous, but was now downcast and disconsolate. Before he had taken his seat she asked the cause of his apparent reticence and why he seemed so gloomy. Mr. Steadman buried his face in his hands and wept for a moment which only served to increase Mrs. Steadman's anxiety. She went to him, placed her arms around his neck and exclaimed, "Mr. Steadman, do tell me what is the matter! you alarm me! you shock me!"

He raised his head and sobbingly replied, "My wife, I am ruined! ruined!"

"Ruined," replied she, "How are you



ruined? Do tell me what is the cause of your disturbance?"

He gazed earnestly into her face for a moment, and taking her by the hand said: "Helen I am ruined financially; I am bankrupt, and all our money, all our property, even this dear old home of ours, which has sheltered me in the days of my infancy will have to be sold to meet the payment of that note which I endorsed last October for my friend Mr. Lapell. You remember me telling you of my endorsing the note to save him from having his home mortgaged."

Mrs. Steadman was now very much overcome with grief. She had a brave and strong-minded woman, but her demonstrations of grief were not as forcible as Mr. Steadman thought they would be upon such sad intelligence. She wiped the tears from her eyes, and with a spirit of resignation only possible to those whose lives have been consecrated to the Father who "doeth all things well," replied, "This is indeed a calamity. It will be hard to become reconciled to such a dis-



astrous fate after having enjoyed such a long period of uninterrupted felicity. During your absence to-day I was retrospecting and could not call to mind a single moment of unpleasantness since our marriage. We have certainly been blessed with all that makes life truly happy, and I was thinking how thankful we should be to God for so many of his blessings. I also wondered if it would be possible for our lives to be always thus blessed, always be as prosperous as we had been. I was so forcibly impressed with the abundance of God's grace and his blessings that I repaired to my closet and offered him sincere thanks for his kindness and his blessings, and I remember that I promised Him that I would ever be resigned to His will. 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' I know that if the Lord has blessed us so bountifully He will not forsake us when we most need assistance."

"Helen, your equanimity is truly commendable, and is all that renders it possible for me to bear this heavy stroke. Had you been so heavily



pressed with this great disaster of ours as to have been insensible to consolation, or had you railed at me or in the least seemed to censure me I should have been totally desperate. I am miserable as it is; miserable because we will have to sell this happy dear old home of ours; the home that my father gave me, the home of my dear mother, the home that is endeared to me by a thousand tender ties. It is a patrimony, a rich and valued legacy from my old father who now rests in the bosom of God; but Helen, with all this I shall strive to be happy for your sake."

Ah! it is hard indeed for those who have been reared in affluence to become reconciled to the reverses and hardships of a life of privations, and so it proved with Mr. Steadman's family. The loss of his fortune had become known to all his friends and acquaintances. He had some very warm sympathizers, but he found they were far less in number than he had expected. He was much grieved to discover that some of his most intimate friends were becoming less demonstrative



than formerly, and they were those who had enjoyed his hospitality for a number of years, and who had considered it an honor to claim friendship with such a true and noble gentleman. Their evening calls were less frequent and of shorter duration, which evinced the fallacy and deceit of the human heart.

Mr. Steadman had heard and read of many incidents of deceitfulness in matters of friendship, but unfortunately for him he never believed the human heart capable of becoming so vile as to lose its sense of appreciation for the true and noble friend. He had never been so circumstanced as to need the financial assistance of another, and accepted those as friends who sought his favor from purely mercenary motives. Had he not been so credulous he would have been better able to endure the scoffs of his former friends, but his pure and unsuspecting heart never suffered him to believe that friendship was a cheat. He had made so many sad hearts happy by his kindness and charity, and had planted upon the careworn cheek



of the poor and needy so many smiles of gratitude that he was constrained to believe that friendship was something else besides a name. It was not until experience had taught him different that he could say that "one may smile and smile and be a villain still." The man who possesses the capability of discerning integrity is the only one who may escape the misfortune of betrayal. A man credulous and tender-hearted yields to the slightest testimonial of regard and will hug to his bosom the demon that seeks his destruction. Had the noble and generous heart of Mr. Steadman been more questioning in the character of the objects of its love he would have been spared the pain of betrayal, but unfortunately for him he measured the standard of the human heart by that of his own, which was too pure and unsuspecting to question the sincerity of the demonstrations proffered him.

The loss of his friends seemed to distress him as much as the loss of his fortune. He knew that the loss of his fortune had been occasioned by his



efforts to assist one in distress, and yet his friends showed no more appreciation of him and no more sympathy than had he lost it by gambling.

He sought to conceal the real extent of his distress from his loving and affectionate wife, but this was fruitless. He sought to console her by telling her that his friends would give him all the assistance he might need to recover his great loss, but she was not one to rely so implicitly in friendship as he had done. She saw at once that there was no possibility of regaining their loss and resolved if need be to sew or teach for the support of their family. She saw nothing but want and privation before them and she had become reconciled to her lot and she determined to make the best of it. She was philosophic in mind and had the power of making the best of everything. She possessed an unfaltering faith in the amplitude of God's mercy and at the gain or loss of a blessing she would always exclaim: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Her only endeavor at present seemed to be to for-



get their misfortune and adapt their manner of living to their means and to console the heart of her husband. She never expressed a regret at the loss of those false friends who in the hour of prosperity were lavish in their demonstrations of affection. She knew there was no change in her worthiness to command or maintain their esteem. Ah! experience will teach us that the loss of fortune is the loss of friends and social standing. Intrinsic worth or moral rectitude does not maintain that friendship which the wealthy bestow on the wealthy. Dire necessity constrained Mr. Steadman's family to retire from that degree of social life which they formerly occupied and to live in seclusion and privacy. There were a few families who had been enamored by the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Steadman who were their real sympathizers and friends, and their counsel and assistance proved of great value. These friends had sounded all the depths and shores along the stream of a rugged life, and were able to instruct Mr. and Mrs. Steadman as to where they would



encounter the bitterest reverses and how to avoid them.

How ignorant are those who live a life of luxury and ease of the hardships and privations of the poor. When they are brought down from the heights of high social life to want and privation, how unqualified are they to grapple with its stern realities. It is only such who can justly appreciate the cares and privations of the poor.

Mrs. Steadman was a lady of high literary attainments, not as a writer, but she was thoroughly informed in science and art. She possessed an education of which very few ladies could boast. This being known to all her acquaintances in her immediate neighborhood as well as the adjacent ones, she was asked to accept a position as teacher of the village school. Mr. Steadman's pride revolted at the idea of his wife having to undergo such labor. He felt that he could not subject himself to the humiliation of his wife having to take any part in the support of the family. He sought earnestly to persuade her not to accept the posi-



tion, as he could and would provide for the family without her assistance in that way. But after repeated entreaties she obtained his consent to accept the position. It was not with any pleasure she took this position except that of being a material assistance to her husband. So it was with her as with the apothecary from whom Romeo purchased the mortal drug to effect his own extermination. "It was her poverty and not her will that consented."

The salary she was to receive was a very inadequate remuneration for the services she was to render, yet she thought it would be a great assistance in the support of the family. She had always regarded the profession of "teaching the young idea how to shoot" as a sacred and noble one. She felt no lack of qualification as to the extent of her information, but she knew that the power of successfully imparting information had not been given to every one.

The patrons of the school were to be composed chiefly of those poor people who in the days



of Mr. Steadman's prosperity found in him a warm and devoted friend. One of them was one of Mrs. Steadman's relations whom she loved devotedly because she was an exemplary Christian and a member of the same church, and to whom Mr. and Mrs. Steadman had ever been kind and charitable. This was the family of Lester Gladwell. Mrs. Steadman and Mrs. Gladwell were sisters; there had always been a great difference in their worldly possessions, yet there had never been a manifest estrangement between them on account of this difference in fortunes.

All the preliminaries had been made for the opening of the school, and on a lovely morning in September a large number of children gathered at the old village school-house. Among the number was Clifton Steadman. There were boys and girls of various ages and various characters and capabilities. There were the mischief-maker and the drone, the gentle and obedient, and the vicious and stubborn. Such were the variety of characters with whom she must deal. Her expe-



rience in life had been such as to afford her but little opportunity of studying human nature, but she was in a position now that would give her a better opportunity than she would have obtained from a lifetime association with the outside world, for children always reveal their true natures while men reveal only that which serves their purpose.

The first three days of school Mrs. Steadman occupied in organizing a system and classifying the pupils. Clifton was now a regular pupil in the village school. He had only attended school one term, but had advanced in all of his studies very rapidly. After three days of examination of pupils Mrs. Steadman opened school. These three days which she had occupied in organizing had given her pupils a slight introduction to her character. They had become forcibly impressed with her firm and unyielding disposition. She with only these three days experience had discovered that the great variety of characters with whom she must deal could not all be governed successfully by the same mode of discipline. She had



discovered that there were characters which could be brought and kept in strict obedience by the gentle look of kindness, while there were others whose passions and proclivities were wild, and over whom the reins of restriction could not be slackened, but at the very beginning she had been successful in teaching all her pupils to revere her, and there is no obedience so true, so constant and so subservient as that offered through a combined sense of love and fear. To know her was to love her, and the success of her experiment as instructress was predicted by all her friends, and watched with sanguine expectations. She possessed every attribute of the true and noble. Her disposition made her a warm friend to all who met her. There was not a place of suffering but she had frequented as a ministering angel to soothe the cares of the distressed, the down-trodden, and to alleviate the pain of the sick and suffering. There was something peculiar in the effect of her every movement and her voice was so sweet and gentle that it was truly magical in its influence. She was tall in



stature, symmetrical and perfect in form, and possessed a happy union of elements to form a character that might be termed perfection.

“To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,  
To throw a perfume on the violet,  
To smooth the ice, or add another hue  
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light  
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,  
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

“Wasteful and ridiculous excess” indeed it would be to attempt an improvement of her character. Who would have visited the poor as she did when she had never a wish that was not gratified. She never seemed to be the least aware of her superior qualifications. There was nothing affected about her. When she made a visit to the bedside of some poor man, woman or child, she did not seek to keep it concealed from her friends in high life, and when she gave it was not with the expectation of requital. In the giving of alms she did not let her left hand know what her right did. She was governed by the word of God in all her actions, and this manner of giving is the only one



that ever receives divine recognition, for we are instructed, "Do not thy alms before men to be seen and heard of, but do them in secret and thy Father who seeth in secret will reward thee openly."

Mr. Steadman had earnestly sought to recover his losses, but all efforts were as yet in vain. He had proposed a compromise to Mr. Lapell and offered to be satisfied with only half payment. Mr. Lapell had been a rich merchant in the little city of Gunville and Mr. Steadman had traded with him for a good many years; but by large and wild speculations in stocks and cotton futures Mr. Lapell was rendered almost penniless. He sought to obtain the necessary funds from Mr. Steadman to conceal his loss. Mr. Lapell's creditors hearing of his losses, and the reckless manner of his speculations, drew on him for a large sum of money which he found himself totally unable to pay.

Mr. Steadman and Mr. Lapell had been very intimate friends for a number of years, and their



manner of doing business with each other was to accept a verbal promise only. They would not employ the very necessary and wise formality of demanding security, one from the other, for the loan of any amount of money. Mr. Steadman finally proposed to Mr. Lapell to compromise on the payment of only one-third of the sum which was due him, and even this he refused on the plea of insolvency.

Mr. Steadman was now for the first time determined to institute suit for the recovery of his loss. He had a warm friend, a Mr. Stanley, who was a talented and successful attorney living in Gunville whom he wished to consult in reference to the suit, and after conferring with his wife in reference to taking this step, he was fully determined in the premises. The following day he drove over to Gunville for this purpose. When Mr. Steadman tapped at the door of Mr. Stanley's office Mr. Stanley himself responded, and greeted him in the usual friendly and affable manner that was characteristic of him.



“Mr. Steadman,” said Mr. Stanley, “I am very glad to see you; I trust Mrs. [Steadman’s health remains good?”

“No, Mr. Stanley,” he replied, “Helen was quite indisposed this morning when I left. She seems to be declining rapidly, yet she is seldom confined to her bed. I think she is taxing herself too heavily. She has quite a large school and seems perfectly delighted with her teaching, though I am fearful that my dear Helen will not live long.”

“I hope this is only an apprehension of yours,” replied Mr. Stanley, “and that your fears are more imaginary than real. My acquaintance with Mrs. Steadman constrains me to believe that her force of character and equanimity is sufficient to enable her to stand up bravely under any misfortune that might befall her, and I am under the impression that she will endure this misfortune of yours with Christian fortitude and Indian endurance. And now I would be pleased to know that you will prove as brave and courageous as I know she will be. Mr. Steadman, I know that it has



been the exemplification of her character that has made you the man that you have been in a moral sense. You remember when you married Helen Molton you were disposed to be wild, and I could but observe what a material change came over you after your marriage. Now, my friend, as one who loves you and who really has your interest at heart, let me persuade you not to persist in despondency; you will not only bring yourself to greater suffering, but you will add to the suffering of your wife."

"Yes, Mr. Stanley, I appreciate all this; but how is it possible for a man who is at all susceptible to emotions of any kind to bear such a misfortune as ours without great mental disquietude?" Mr. Steadman was very much overcome, his eyes filled with tears as he said: "This is indeed hard to bear!"

Mr. Stanley had by this time been deeply moved by the tears of his faithful friend, but he displayed no signs of emotion. After a moment's hesitation Mr. Stanley called to Mr. Steadman and



said: "William, have I not always been a friend faithful and true to you?" To this he received an affirmative reply. "Then tell me if I offer you advice which your better judgment approves will you accept it kindly?"

"Why, certainly I will," replied Mr. Steadman, with some degree of surprise.

"It is a painful duty that I feel encumbered upon me, but have resolved to endure the pain it gives me to speak to you about it."

Mr. Stanley then drew his chair quite close to that of his friend, and taking him by one hand while he placed the other on his shoulder, he continued: "I observe that you have been drinking. Now, with a man of your experience and observation it would be useless for me to picture the dangerous and contaminating effects of this awful habit. You have seen enough to warn you. There is but one way to avoid its destructive influence or to conquer the craving for it, and that is to follow the teachings of the old adage, 'Taste not, touch not and handle not.' Think of the



wife who at the marriage altar you promised to love, and for whom you would forsake all others. The sorrow she has is all that she can bear; then would you be unkind, so untrue as to crush her at one cruel stroke?"

Mr. Steadman's expression at once forcibly evinced a sense of guilt and shame, and he blushing replied, "I do not intend to drink excessively. I have always heard that whiskey would destroy trouble, and I felt that mine must be abbreviated in some way."

"Well, will you tell me then that you will never under any circumstances touch whiskey again?" entreated Mr. Stanley.

Mr. Steadman hesitated for a moment, then nodded his head, which he meant as an affirmative answer to Mr. Stanley's interrogatory.

"Mr. Steadman, I am gratified to obtain this promise, and for the good that you and your noble wife will both derive from a total abstinence I think you should make me an open and a more positive promise than simply a nod of the head."



“Well, then, if it will afford you any more satisfaction, I will say that I will never touch it again,” replied Mr. Steadman in a very accented tone that carried with it an indication that he wished to further avoid any reference to the subject.

“Mr. Stanley, I came to you for legal advice and for which I expect to pay you, but as I promised at the beginning I would take no exceptions to any advice you felt disposed to proffer, I therefore pardon the liberty you have taken to advise me in my private affairs, since you profess to offer it in the name of friendship.” At these words Mr. Stanley felt a little hurt, as he had no intention of offering or giving the slightest offense to his old and esteemed friend, and he readily pardoned him as he felt that his misfortune had so much affected him that he was not altogether responsible for his seeming ingratitude. Mr. Stanley then said :

“What advice can I give you, Mr. Steadman?”

“I wish to know if I can obtain my money from Mr. Lapell?”



“Have you any idea of the real financial condition of Mr. Lapell? You know he has recently made an assignment of his stock and some of his property to his wife, which of course was done to prevent you serving an attachment upon him.”

“No, I cannot say that I know anything of his real condition, but I’m induced to believe that his failure in business was not so disastrous as he would have me believe.”

“Well, do you hold a note against him with or without endorsements?”

“No, sir; I have never asked Mr. Lapell for a note or security for anything. I have had business with him for a number of years and found him so honest that I just considered Lapell’s word as good as his bond, and I have obtained from him a number of times very large sums of money and whenever I offered him security he would laugh at me and tell me that my word was better than other men’s notes. So you see we dealt with each other in this way in all our business transactions.”

“Well, Mr. Steadman, there is no way to



recover your money unless you could establish the fact that he is really solvent, and that the making of his property over to his wife was for the purpose of defrauding his creditors."

"Then I suppose I am unable to recover anything from him?"

"No, you have no recourse at all unless he has failed to state that he owes his wife. If he can show that he ever obtained any money from his wife then he can make her his preferred creditor according to the laws of this State, and has not criminated himself; but if he has only pretended to have obtained money from his wife, then he is liable to criminal prosecution."

Upon investigation it was discovered that Mr. Lapell had obtained a large sum of money from his wife, which she inherited, so Mr. Steadman had no means of obtaining his money and would have to bear the loss. He left Mr. Stanley's office feeling very despondent, and after he returned home he informed his wife of the impossibility of ever recovering anything from Mr. Lapell.



Abject poverty seemed to be staring them boldly in the face, but Mrs. Steadman told him that it was nothing more than she had expected and seemed perfectly reconciled to her fate. This sadly ended the happiness and brilliant prospects of the Steadman family, and they were now to encounter all the hardships of a life of poverty and great suffering.



## CHAPTER II.

MRS. STEADMAN'S school was continued and was attended with the greatest success. The advancement of the pupils had demonstrated to her patrons that she was peculiarly adapted and qualified for the position. She had taken great interest in her school, not so much because she possessed any fondness for it, but because she was so conscientious that she could not feel satisfied with accepting her salary without feeling that she had in every way given value received, she also possessed too much pride to be willing to prove a failure in anything that she attempted.

Clifton had rendered her every assistance in his power. He set a good example to his school-mates, he was regarded the best boy in school and by far the brightest. His influence upon those predisposed to disorderly conduct was very great. He had by mingling with so many light-hearted



and joyous children lost some of his former reticence and apparent grumness, yet he plainly evinced a moroseness unusual for one of his age. He seemed to prefer the companionship of girls. During playtime he would gather wild flowers, nuts and grapes, make their swings, and had mingled so much with them that he felt himself one of their number. By his manly conduct and kindness he had made many warm friends among them. They felt no more reserve in his presence than with those of their own sex.

Laverne Gladwell, Clifton's cousin, had shown him the greatest attention because she felt that the cause of his sadness was the loss of his father's fortune, and she took the place of a sister as Clifton had no sisters, and the kindness of Laverne to him and to his dear mother had made him feel really that she was more of a sister than a cousin. She had brought an influence to bear upon him that had effected more in changing his eccentricities than his mother had been able to do. Laverne was of a mild but happy disposition, she had the



power of making others happy, and she never appeared to be the least sad or unhappy in all her life, nor could she admire those who are always sad. And thus it was she had determined to brighten the disposition of Clifton and manifested as much interest in him as though he had been her brother. One evening after the close of the school she asked Clifton to walk home with her, that she wished to tell him something, and as Clifton's curiosity was somewhat aroused he gladly consented. They walked slowly in order that the other pupils might keep in advance of them. She had sought this opportunity to persuade him to abandon his peculiar ways and to try to be happy and not to give himself up to such despondency.

“Clifton,” she said, “I am going to be a sister to you; I know that you do not know anything of the love of a sweet and affectionate sister. So now, Clifton, let me be your sister; I feel sorry for you because you always seem so sad. You act as though you had not a friend in the world—now let me beg you to cheer up.”



“Laverne, how can I be happy when my father has lost everything that he possessed? Do you not think I would indeed be a strange creature to be happy with all this trouble? As for myself I do not worry so much, but when I think of my dear mother having to labor as she does it produces a sorrow that cannot be imagined by you.”

“Yes, Clifton, I can imagine, I can fully appreciate your feelings; I know that this is a heavy stroke upon you and upon Aunt Helen and Uncle William, and I do feel so sorry for aunt Helen, she is laboring so hard for one who has always been blessed with abundance; but, Clifton, be brave, be cheerful and try to make your mother cheerful. It is only adding to her sorrow to see you so despondent.”

At the mention of his mother's hardships Clifton gave vent to a flood of tears which made Laverne regret having alluded to his mother's condition.

“Clifton, do not weep so bitterly; it almost breaks my heart to see you weeping. These dark



clouds that gather around your young life will soon be lost in the brightness of a happier day, I hope. God has told us that he 'loveth those whom he chasteneth.' Then, Clifton, if God loves you He will take care of you; He will not see you suffer. I think you do your friends an injustice to feel that you are so friendless. Those you may have lost by uncle's misfortune would have been of no assistance to you. If they forsake you or cease to love you just at the time you need them most, it is all the evidence you need of their insincerity. Such a boy as you are cannot be without friends; you will always find appreciative and worthy friends among the good people you meet, and you will find true and noble hearts wherever you go. There is always some heart to beat responsive to our own. If you wish to be happy in this life do not expect to make everyone your friend. If you have but one friend faithful and true you should be happy."

"Ah, Laverne, you know that without my mother and father there is not a single soul in this



wide world whom I can call my friend," replied Clifton with a solemn voice that seemed to indicate that he really felt himself without a friend.

"You know, Clifton, that I am your friend, and I sympathize with you so much that I feel your sorrow is my own."

They had seated themselves by the roadside, and at this warm expression of sympathy Clifton buried his face in his hands and wept bitterly. It was some time before the silence was broken. He gazed steadfastly in her bright brown eyes, and when he had suppressed his feelings enough to speak he said:

"You are so very kind to me, Laverne, and I love you as a sister; you have always thought so much of me, and even now you seem to love me more and sympathize more because of my misfortune, which gives me a two-fold confidence in the sincerity of your esteem. Your kindness to instruct me in my studies will ever be cherished with the tenderest recollection. You are so good and noble, and have tried so hard to assist my



dear mother, and make her duties as light as you could. God will bless you, Laverne," and again Clifton's tears betrayed his feelings.

"Since you have proffered so much kindness to mother and myself I feel at liberty to ask you to do anything in your power for her sake. I wish to make this request of you, Laverne: that you will always assist mother as much as possible. You know that my services will soon be required on the farm; I have only about three months more to go to school, then my school days will end forever, and I feel assured that I could be happy if mother was comfortably situated. I am not disturbed, Laverne, because I have to labor, but it is the loss of an opportunity to complete my education, and seeing mother so unpleasantly situated. You are very far advanced in your studies now, and can be of much assistance to her. All the children seem to love you and they will readily exemplify your actions; your sweet disposition will have a great influence and this will assist mother in controlling them."



“Clifton, I wish you to feel fully assured that I will experience the greatest pleasure in adding to Aunt Helen’s every comfort and happiness. I hope you will not hesitate to command my services, for it will be indeed a very great pleasure to me to throw a ray of sunshine upon the sad and benighted hearts of you and dear Aunt Helen. I shall in all things be a good girl and give her no trouble, and I will endeavor to influence others to be good.”

Clifton was so overcome with emotion and gratitude that he sprang to his feet and grasped his cousin by the hand while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

“God will bless you, Laverne. I wish that you could only know how noble and kind I believe you to be! May your little heart never feel what mine has felt; it is too noble, too pure to be oppressed with care or sorrow. You are so good and kind to make me this promise, I shall always love you.”

Clifton still held her little hand and gazed



earnestly into her sweet face. He could not speak the emotions of his little heart that had been relieved of such a burden.

It was now growing late, the sun was sinking behind the tall trees of the forest, and Clifton knew that they both must be getting home. As they parted he raised her little hand and pressed it tenderly to his lips while a crimson flush came upon her cheeks.

As Clifton walked slowly homeward his heart felt more joyous than it had for many months. He felt that now he had a sister to love and cherish who had promised to be good and kind to his dear mother, and as he loitered on his way he wondered if it would ever be that anything would come between him and his sweet little cousin to mar the pleasure of their two-fold affection. He wondered if she would always be a sister to him, or would she, like some others, prove only a friend in words, or would she forget him when they would be separated. He loved her because she was his cousin, and had been kind to him and his



mother ; and he loved her because he thought her so good and so noble. It was a painful hour to him when he left her. He felt that he had found a friend in Laverne that would make him happy. He had not known her intimately until now. He knew that if Laverne proved as faithful in her friendship as he would prove in his that he would try to be happy with any lot it might be his to encounter. When he reached home he found his mother had grown quite uneasy about him ; she was standing at the gate waiting and watching for him, and when he met her she said :

“Where have you been, my boy, and what has kept you out so late? I had grown very anxious about you. I hope my good boy has not been at any mischief,” while she stooped and kissed him and pressed him fondly to her breast.

“Mother, I have been feeling quite gloomy to-day, and I knew of no one to whom I would rather unburden myself than to Cousin Laverne, so I have been with her. You know what an interest she has manifested in me, and I have learned



to love her fondly. She is the noblest girl I ever knew."

"Yes, she is without a parallel," remarked Mrs. Steadman, "she is so kind to every one, and I do not believe she has an enemy in school, and she tries so hard to help me. I have not reproved her since school began, so if you have been with her I know you have not been tempted to do anything wrong. I am very happy that you have found some one you can regard as a friend; you will feel better now I hope. The heart always yearns for sympathy in its hours of wretchedness, and the sweet consolation of friends is all that sustains us in the hours of distress. When clouds of misfortune gather around us with no hopes left of their breaking, when there seems nothing before us to give even a momentary forgetfulness of our sorrows, how sweet sounds the voice of sympathy. It falls upon the blighted and care-worn heart like the refreshing dews of night upon some withered herb, giving life and beauty and making it appear again in all the freshness of its former loveliness.



Ah, how wretched must be that heart which is insensible to the consolation and sympathy of a true and faithful friend, or who looks out upon the desert of life and finds not one oasis upon which his wearied heart may take repose. The path of life even at best is strewn with thorns and thistles; but the thorns seem not to prick and the thistles seem not to sting if the hand of love leads us. My boy, I trust you are fully capable of appreciating the friendship of your cousin Laverne, and it is a fortunate thing for you to have one so pure and so noble to be your confidante; but you must be guarded, Clifton, and confine your affection to that of real friendship and not suffer it to burst into an ardent flame of love, which is possible; for those who are kind to us in matters of friendship or who manifest an unselfish esteem often provokes the heart to a love that knows no bounds. But, Clifton, I feel it scarcely necessary to suffer any uneasiness about this as I know that the loving or marrying of cousins would be very inconsistent with your sense of propriety. My



dear son, you have of late appeared so disconsolate, and if you give yourself up to so much despondency your future life will be cast with a deep dye of distress, and you will finally become, I fear, insensible to all emotions of pleasure and become a slave to melancholy. So for this reason I am pleased that you have found such a congenial friend in Laverne, but again let me warn you to be guarded in your affection, for as dearly as I love you I would almost as soon follow you to your grave as to see you marry Laverne."

All this time Clifton had been greatly absorbed in attention to the words of his mother, and while she had given him great consolation in presenting to him the many great blessings of friendship, he felt that he could not obey the warning she had given him in reference to his affection for Laverne. He felt as she did that it would be a crime to marry his cousin, but he could not regard it improper to love her. Had Mrs. Steadman been the least suspecting she might have seen his expression when she mentioned the impropriety of his loving La-



verne. Ah, too well did he know that he loved her, but he had never intimated it to her in words, yet his actions while with her had spoken volumes, and had she not been so young and such a stranger to that tender passion she might have known the sad truth long ago. Clifton had sought manfully to conceal the secret from her, and it was not until they parted in the forest that she had the slightest intimation of his feelings for her. When he took her by the hand and kissed it as they bade each other good bye she feared that was an indication of love, and so it was, but it had been unwittingly bestowed. Laverne thought, or rather hoped, that she might be mistaken in this, and she resolved to watch Clifton's actions more closely in the future, and not accept that as substantial evidence of a passionate regard, as Clifton's gratitude had been so aroused by her kind proffering of assistance to her mother. To those of experience this would have been a full revelation of the secret, for the look he gave her as he pressed her little hand was more eloquent than words and would



have revealed more than words. There was a long silence that followed these words of Mrs. Steadman which was at length broken by Clifton.

“Mother, if I did not love Laverne I would be indeed heartless and ungrateful, for she is so very kind to me and she has done so much to console and make you happy that I cannot see why you would not have me love her.”

“Yes, Clifton, if you did not love Laverne as a friend and as a sister I should think you very ungrateful. If you love her with something like a brother's love it would be just and proper, and I only warned you that you might keep yourself guarded. You should know that such kindness as she has shown you, and your great appreciation, can scarcely fail to awaken a feeling too strong, too wild, and too tender to be called only gratitude.”

Clifton and Laverne had been closely associated with each other. He never had a secret that he would conceal from her. He unfolded every sorrow to her with the sweet assurance of gaining her



sympathy. He had revealed secrets to her that he had kept from his mother. But all this intimacy, and all the pleasure they had evinced in each other's society had not been regarded by any one as other than the warmest friendship.

But this friendship was growing with their years, and had assumed such proportions that concealment was now almost impossible. Clifton's strong and resolute will, and his acute sense of propriety would seem to have been a sufficient equipment to enable him to conquer his passion. If friendship be the germ of affection sown in the garden of a heart susceptible it always ripens into a strong and beautiful flower. Clifton was now bowing a willing subject to Cupid, that god of love who holds dominion over every element of the human heart. He had often challenged Cupid to pierce him with his arrows—he thought himself invulnerable. But now he would seek the solitude of the hills and forests to pour forth the love of his young heart for his little cousin; and even in his dreams at night the lovely form of his little cousin



would play before his vision in all the beauty of a fairy queen. He would feel the sweet impress of her lips upon his, and as he would stretch forth his arms to embrace her, the phantom would disappear, and like the fruits that hung before Tantalus, it would recede from his grasp, he would wake to find it all a dream. The dreams of Clifton Steadman had become filled with such phantoms, and while awake the sweet sound of her gentle voice was to him sweeter than the dying notes of the Æolian harp. The touch of her little hand would magnetize him. Oh, could it be that he who was of such a strong and resolute heart had become so weak and so subservient to the influence of love. He knew that love was strong and hard to conquer, and he regarded its influence more powerful than that of all other passions, but he had always regarded himself strong enough to conquer any passion that might strive with him for the ascendancy. Now he had one to encounter that would call into requisition all the powers of his being, and which might remain undaunted



even after the repulsive influence of offended pride, or after the withering blast of neglect might leave him with a lingering step. But Clifton had not the influence of offended pride to assist him in conquering his affection, nor could the strong arm of neglect be raised to assist him. On the contrary the kind and gentle words of his little cousin served as a strong blast fanning the flame of his affection. Like the simoon, that leaves death and ruin in its path, so is the influence of neglect upon the heart, and its love, pure and unselfish, knows no law and has no bounds. Pride cannot conquer it, anger cannot reach it, misfortune cannot weaken it; but neglect, like the silent creeping on of some fatal disease, robs it of its faith and of its power, robs it of its joy, and leaves it to perish in wretchedness and misery.

At this age Clifton had displayed a fondness for the muse. He would often repair to the forest and enjoy the solitude which had many charms for him. He had written many simple rhymes of Laverne, yet he had never shown



them to her. There was a peculiar simplicity about these early effusions of his that showed plainly they came from a heart full of affection. He never displayed any fondness for the harp until his little heart had become replete with a love that knew no bounds, which must teach us to believe that

“Never durst poet touch a pen to write  
Until his ink were tempered with love signs;  
O, then his lines would ravage savage ears  
And plant in tyrants mild humility!”

With truth the first two lines of the above quotation might be applied to Clifton, but not the latter. His effusions were too weak and too shallow to “ravage savage ears and plant in tyrants mild humility.” He was born with a poet’s love and sentiment but not with a poet’s power and depth of thought. Had Clifton been educated or encouraged he might have attained a state of mediocrity, but all the talent he displayed in this direction had not met favor with any one; and his parents, knowing that his education could never be perfected, sought to dis-



courage him. They had both received a finished education, and they could not bear the thought of their boy launching out upon the broad field of literature with such an imperfect qualification, for there he would encounter the unfriendly critic who would not take into consideration his limited opportunities, but would condemn or commend just as individual worth might suggest, and they knew when his productions came before a fastidious public they would soon sink into oblivion.

Judging Clifton's information by his opportunities and by his age one would not expect much of him; but he would not let opposition discourage him. He had resolved that if his name never went down to other ages with that renown which had been attained by others as authors, he would store his mind with a vast amount of knowledge to show those of limited opportunities what one might attain by dint of hard study. He possessed that peculiar turn of mind or power of digesting rapidly and retaining



tenaciously. His mind seemed to stereotype every intricate problem to which it was directed. With such a capability as he possessed of retaining and with such a gift of continuance it would not take him long to qualify for a literary life, though he decided not to pursue it.

This was the period in Clifton's life where his hardships and mental anguish had their beginning. A few months more and his happy school days would be over forever. These last days of school would always afford him a happy recollection. The shady groves around the old village school house through which he and his little cousin and other dear friends of his childhood had wandered in search of wild flowers, the babbling brooks upon whose mossy banks he had so often strolled, and the thick dark-foliaged trees under which he had so often sat and dreamed of his first love, would hold a place which time nor change could ever efface. Ah! how sweet are the recollections of our childhood! All other memories that once might have been dear to us may be forgotten when



the hour of misfortune comes, but the sweet memories of our early years, the friends and companions of our childish sports hold a place in the memory that cease only with our being. When we have approached the end of our career often the only pleasure left us is in retrospecting the days of our youth and innocence—the days in which the heart knew no guile and was not susceptible to the influence of sorrow. How often those who have attained a ripe old age soliloquize thus:

Oh, cruel fate, bring back to me  
The days I spent in childish glee!  
For manhood is an age of care  
Replete with sorrow and despair.  
There is no joy in life's last scene  
But viewing those which once have been.  
The youth's gay heart never feels  
The care, the woe, manhood reveals;  
Then let me live my childhood o'er  
And view its happy scenes once more!

Yes, Clifton knew that his barque would soon be launched out upon the broad rough sea of life, where it would drift far away from those then so dear to him. Yet he did not anticipate the mis-



fortunes that awaited him and the many hardships and privations that would soon be his to endure. He had many earnest hopes of his father's ability to adjust his business affairs, and that he would yet realize the hopes he had entertained of completing his education.

Mr. Steadman had not given Clifton a detailed account of his losses. He would reveal the sad truth little by little so that it would not appear so heavy and hard to bear. When misfortune forecasts its coming it prepares the heart for the burden and teaches it submission and resignation, but when it falls upon a heart that is reveling in happiness it is crushing, and the blow brings absolute desolation, misery and anguish. It is like the convulsions of earth when disturbed by volcanic eruptions, or like the thunder's peal from a clear sky on a summer day.

Mr. and Mrs. Steadman had set Clifton an example of resignation, and had, at every mention of the hope he entertained of completing his education, warned him not to hope too earnestly, that



he might be disappointed. And while they had not told him the true story of their misfortune, circumstances had revealed enough to somewhat prepare his young and affectionate heart for the worst.

There was now but one thing that made life worth the living to Clifton, and that was to cherish the unbounded affection that was bestowed upon him by his parents, and his little cousin Laverne, whom he idolized and worshipped with all the fervor of his little heart, yet no one had dreamed of his devotion to her. She had suspected it, but was not as yet positive. Those who observed his sadness were surprised to see one so young become so susceptible to sorrow, for as they thought, a boy of his age would not have been capable of taking upon himself so much, though for the sorrow of parents.



### CHAPTER III.

ONE morning, just before the time for the opening of school, Laverne approached Clifton with a bright smile upon her face, and said : "Clifton, I have some very pleasant news for you, but I cannot tell you until noon."

"O, Laverne, do tell me now ; I never felt the need of consolation as I do now. Would you be so cruel as to torture me with the suspense I would suffer till noon?"

"It is not cruelty in me Clifton that causes me not to tell you now. I am sorry I said anything to you about it till I had an opportunity of telling you all. I would not have time to tell you now ; I could not finish before the bell would ring. I saw that you seemed depressed, and I thought I would tell you that I had pleasant news for you, thinking it would cheer you up."

"Will you go with me down to the brook to



tell me? We can then have such a good opportunity of enjoying a long talk together. The evening I walked part of the way home with you I felt better when I left you than ever before."

They were interrupted by the ringing of the school bell, and they hastened to its call. As Laverne stood before her cousin informing him of the happy intelligence she had for him, and which she would reveal to him at the noon recess, she looked lovelier, and her eyes beamed with an expression of affection that Clifton had never seen in them before. Her voice seemed sweeter than he had ever heard it. While she spoke there was not that alternate flush of the cheek which often betrayed the secrets of an affectionate heart when it seeks to conceal its true sentiments, but she appeared more like a sister talking to a brother.

The intelligence that Laverne was to reveal to him which was to gladden his young heart so much was of such great concern to him that he was rendered unfit for study, and his inattention to his lessons was perceptible to every member of the



class. In his imagination he thought it might be that she had discovered that he loved her, and it might be that she only wanted to give him the assurance that his affection for her was duly appreciated and reciprocated. Ah! he wondered, could it be that she loved him, and wished to express her affection to brighten his sad life forever? Ah, no; he thought, it cannot be that she loves me; she has never demonstrated any love for me except as a sister.

Laverne had noticed him dropping his book and fixing his eyes upon her till he was lost to his surroundings. He counted the hours and they seemed never to pass and bring the sweet sounds of the bell, which was always rung to announce the hour for recess, when Laverne would tell him what she wished to impart. There never had been a moment of his life so fraught with suspense. After what had seemed an age of anguish the bell announced the noon recess. The children hastened out screaming with laughter, but Clifton crept out without any demonstration of joy. He



took a seat near Laverne after she had arranged to eat her luncheon. He did not finish his dinner, but waited anxiously for Laverne, and when he saw her close the lid of her basket from which she had eaten what seemed to him a long and hearty luncheon, he approached her, and embarrassingly asked her if she would go down upon the brook with him. She evinced much hesitancy and it was not till after many earnest entreaties that she consented. Long before any of the other children had finished eating they had stolen off to the brook. When they had reached a shady spot they seated themselves upon a beautiful mossy bank, and he at once asked her to tell him the glad tidings.

“ You know, Clifton, what a great anxiety you have manifested to complete your education or to take a collegiate course, and you also know how I have sympathized with you. So I have persuaded father to see Mr. Stanley, of Gunville, and get him to write to the president of our State University and tell him of your case ; and father said that



he felt almost certain that when the president had been satisfied as to your character and capabilities it would be a pleasure for him to have you at the University, and to educate you free." Clifton did not seem as much elated over this as Laverne thought he would have been. He had very little confidence in the generosity of the wealthy; he would rather have gone to some poor farmer for such favors than to those surfeiting in affluence, and besides, he did not see how his services could be spared as he would soon have to assist his mother in supporting the family.

"Clifton, I really thought you would have been delighted at this plan," remarked Laverne, with great surprise.

"It will be time enough for me to become elated when I have realized the favor. And, besides, I would very reluctantly receive such favors from those who have no interest in my welfare. With the recommendation it would require to receive the assistance, it would impress my benefactor with an incorrect idea of my capabilities, and



he, no doubt, would expect great things of me in the future. I would not like to feel under such obligations to any one for so much kindness. However, Laverne, for your sake, I shall abide the wishes of my friends."

For a while neither spoke. Clifton felt insensible to all things except that passion of love which seemed to be almost consuming him.

"Laverne, you are so thoughtful of my welfare I do not know how I will ever be able to repay you and thank you for all your solicitude. If Mr. Stanley were to succeed in obtaining any assistance for me, I shall feel under lasting obligations to him, and also to you, Laverne; for I feel that if anything is ever accomplished for me in this direction, it shall be creditable to your influence, and I shall ever feel indebted to you. Laverne, God will duly reward you for all your kindness. If God observes the little sparrows and provides food for them, what rich reward he will have laid up in Heaven for you."

Clifton could not suppress his feelings any



longer, and in a low and sad voice he said:

“Ah! what would be my life without you? My little barque would drift down the stream of life, encountering all the misfortunes that abound upon its rugged waters. There would be no one to steer it safely into a peaceful harbor. O, Laverne, how very dear you are to me; and here, in the presence of our God, I wish to reveal a secret to you. I feel that my heart will burst—I feel that I can not live if I do not tell you. Yet, I fear to do so; and it is only the confidence that I have in your generous, noble and forgiving heart that gives me courage to tell you, for I know that if I did wrong you would forgive me and still remain my friend, and my same kind, good cousin. I would rather lose this strong right arm of mine, with which I must earn bread for myself and mother, than to offend you. You cannot know the bounds of my affection for you; words cannot express nor can actions truly indicate it. I love you with all my heart. It gives me pain to tell you, Laverne, for I feel that by so doing I



shall incur your contempt and hatred. God being my witness, I do not intend or wish to do wrong. I felt that I could not live if I did not tell you this."

Laverne raised her head and looked earnestly into Clifton's eyes and said: "Clifton, why should you feel so grieved to tell me that you love me? I have been kind to you. I have tried to take a sister's place in your heart. Yes, every care of yours has been felt deep down in my own heart; and I am your cousin, and being such a friend to you, it is natural and it is right that you should love me."

"Laverne, I must be honest, though I give offense. You seem not to understand how I love you. I shall tell you, though I lose your friendship forever. I cannot be true to my own heart to permit you to remain ignorant of the nature of my affection any longer. Laverne, look at me; do you not understand me?"

There was quite a silence. It was painful to Clifton to unfold his secret. At length he said:



“I love you with a wild and unutterable passionate affection. This affection has grown with my being and forms a part of it. Laverne, do you forgive me and will you love me? My life will be sad at best, so will you love me to make me happy, love me to make me better, love me because I love you. Laverne, with the brightest hopes of my life blasted, with not a friend on earth besides mother and father to love me, I can be made happy with the assurance of your love. Forgive my weakness, but I would not care to live without your love. I know that it is wrong for cousins to marry, and this I do not ask you; but tell me, will you give me this sweet hope to cherish forever, that you will love me forever? I must have some hope to cherish or my heart will break with sadness. I know this is a surprise to you, but if you do not wish to break my heart while it is yet so young and tender, tell me that you love me. I am sure that with the full assurance of your affection, misfortune could never blight my prospects or render me disconsolate.



Your affection would be a fortification against all the disasters of this life. I regret that the preponderance of my feelings constrains me to press you for an answer, but will you promise to love me?"

Clifton drew Laverne to his breast and pressed a kiss upon her lovely crimson cheek, and asked her again would she promise to love him.

"Ah, Clifton, I fear you do not fully realize the import of the question you ask me. I am but a child, and am not able to ponder and answer such a question as this. It would be wrong for me to make a promise of this kind to one not related to me, then how much more is it wrong to promise to love you who are so closely related to me? You must learn to forget me. We must teach ourselves to forget each other."

"Forget thee; 'I may forget the mother who me gave birth, I may forget that sun that shines so brightly, I may forget the God who made me, but when all things else have become a dreary blank your image will still be before me with not one hue of its loveliness faded, with not one atom of its



sweetness departed, for it is stamped here upon my brain and here upon my heart vivid and distinct.' How can you offend the integrity and sincerity of my affection by even intimating a possibility of forgetfulness. No, not until the night winds are singing their mournful requiem over my lone sepulchre will it be possible for me to forget thee; and even then, 'if the spirits of the departed dead ever participate in the cares and concerns of those dear to them in this transitory life,' regardless of all the attractions my spirit will take its flight back to thee, to bask in the sunshine of thy bewitching smiles. Ah, my dear little cousin, your instruction is easier given than followed. My experience has been quite limited, but it has been sufficient to teach me that it is impossible for the true and trusting heart to ever forget the object of its earliest love. Absence and even cruel neglect may cast their withering blight, but in distant years, when it is thought to be perishing in forgetfulness, some word, some picture or some flower will rekindle the mouldering fires of memory, and



under the influence of a momentary reverie we will feel the gentle touch of some hand, we will hear the soft accents of some voice, we will feel the sweet impress of some lips we once had known and loved, which will teach us that we cannot if we wish forget those we once loved."

"Ah, cousin Clifton, I am sorry you have permitted your affection for me to assume such proportions. You are overwhelmed with emotion now, and speak what I think after sober reflection you will very willingly revoke. I know it would be contrary to your sense of propriety to ever for a moment entertain an idea of marrying me, and it will afford us little pleasure, if any, to just simply love each other. Then let me appeal to your better judgment to teach yourself to forget me. But tell me, why would you have me to answer you?"

"I can not tell, unless—well I think it will make me happier to know whether you love me."

"You know that I love you, Clifton. Have I not manifested it in every way?"



“Yes, but I do not mean that kind of love. I appreciate your friendship with all the gratitude of my heart, but I love you as a lover, and this you have surely observed, and I do not ask you to marry me, but tell me I beseech you, whether you love me as I love you. If you could but know what a heavy burden this would take from my life you would try to love me.”

“Yes, Clifton, I love you, and I appreciate the affection you express for me. But do not let us cast a shadow over our young lives by continuing this love. I feel assured that we can teach ourselves to forget each other as lovers. We can still love each other as friends and as cousins but we must forget each other as lovers. Our sense of propriety should assist us in conquering this affection. And Clifton, I believe if you soberly reflect or consider this, that you will act upon my suggestion.”

Clifton replied in these peculiar lines :

“Let conquerors boast of their fields of fame,  
But he who in virtue arms



A young warm spirit against beauty's charms,  
Who feels her brightness yet defies her thrall,  
Is the best bravest conqueror of them all."

The brave Hannibal, Alexander and Napoleon never committed a braver act than to conquer a love such as this I cherish for you; and if I attempt this I know I will not prove a victor. However, I will marshal all my force that I may be able to direct this wild and maddening love in the channel of propriety. Yet I would not wish to be brave enough to drive it forever from my heart. I would rather commit the sin of loving a cousin than to spend all the years of my life in ignorance of the blessing it now affords me to know what it is to love and be loved in return. I would not be so callous of heart as to spend all the years of life which may yet be allotted me without having my heart to pay homage to some sweet and noble maiden, whose influence would tend to direct my thoughts and actuate me to noble and generous impulses. The man whose heart is not susceptible to love, who never felt its influence, I mistrust."



“'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all.”

They sat beside each other upon the banks of the little brook where they had so often strolled. Though children, they felt the magnitude of the question which they felt their duty to decide, and decide at once. They pondered it well and decided that they would avoid each other's society in the future. Clifton took her by the hand and kissing it gave a long and heavy sigh and said: “Laverne, the greatest struggle of my life is now full upon me. Ah, how am I to forget you when it is my duty to love you? Yet, God being my helper, I hope to conquer this passion. But I shall ever cherish a tender remembrance of all your kindness to me, and may God reward you abundantly for it. I know that I shall never be able to justly compensate you, but God is too gracious, too merciful to permit such favors as you have shown me to go unrequitted.”

Before they parted Laverne asked Clifton to promise her that he would never mention this mat-



ter to her again, and to pledge himself that he would try to forget her. He reluctantly made her the promise, but he had very little confidence in his power to keep it. He knew that it would require much time to conquer his affection, yet his sense of propriety taught him that it was very wrong to cherish such a feeling for her. This was one of the many conflicts of Clifton's life. He was halting between two opinions. There was a warm and passionate affection pressing him in one direction, while a keen sense of propriety was influencing him on the other. In principle he was scrupulously honest, and would not do what he knew to be wrong for all the wealth of the world. He had been taught to regard it a crime to marry a cousin, and it was no doubt this regard rendered it possible for him to lay aside his love for Laverne.

They hurried on to the school house, for neither could bear the thought of being reproached by their school mates. Clifton was sad, because he had promised to lay aside that affection which now



formed a part of his being; and, too well he knew that he and Laverne would soon be separated probably to meet very seldom. Now, with a heart that was truly wretched, he must go forth into the world and battle with many sad reverses. When he returned from school that afternoon his mother inquired of him the cause of his disturbance, but he tried to evade her, as he felt that he could not tell her; but after many earnest entreaties he told her his secret. Mrs. Steadman, very much surprised as well as greatly pained; however, she did not rail at him, but kindly urged him to forget Laverne. She said: "Clifton, I know it would not be necessary for me to tell you how bad it would be for you to suffer your affection for Laverne to continue—you know that you would not for a moment entertain the idea of ever marrying her, then while you are so young is the time to conquer this feeling."

"Mother, I cannot teach myself to forget Laverne, for the kindness she has shown me will ever make me remember her tenderly. And, mother,



I shall ever love her, but I will avoid meeting with her all I can in the future; but when I have passed through a long life of either joy or sorrow, and when the last moment of life is passing away I shall feel the same tender emotions of affection that I now feel, and if I am rational then, mother, your form and Laverne's will in my memory stand side by side, and, as I gaze upon you both, I shall forget the pain of death, and if it be that both of you then have crossed the silent river I shall feel that your hands are beckoning me to come where you shall 'be waiting and watching for me'."

"My son, I am much surprised to know that you love Laverne as you do. It is noble in you to try and forget her."

Mr. Steadman that night, when his little family were assembled, told Clifton all that he had kept secret from him. He told him that he had sold or given all his farm, and even the home in which he was born, and a large portion of their household effects, to Mr. Lapell to pay the amount of the note he had endorsed for him.



Mr. Steadman had now become discouraged, and had it not been for the assistance of his noble wife he would have been rendered an object of charity. He had become so much disturbed that his friends feared he would lose his mind; he had lost all that vivacity which was formerly such a noted characteristic, and this grievous calamity had driven him to the wine cup, which is often resorted to for the consolation of sorrow, but is in reality an augmentation of it.

For the wine cup is productive of more human suffering and sorrow than all other causes combined. The hour of trouble is the time we need our mental faculties.

With all of Mr. Steadman's discretion he had failed to appreciate this and was now drinking to excess, which was adding anguish to his wretched condition, also wringing the heart of his noble and affectionate wife.

Mrs. Steadman had discovered Mr. Steadman's too frequent drinking on several occasions, but she sought to keep it secret from Clifton.



When Clifton went to his room that night it was not to retire at once in the usual manner to his quiet repose. Ah, no, the boy's heart was sick with sorrow, and he felt that his life would ever be a miserable blank. But with all his dark forebodings little did he realize what was before him. Could he have raised the thick veil of futurity and marked the thorny path he must tread, and beheld all the vicissitudes that awaited him, he would have been tempted to end his existence then.

What a fortunate thing for us that we have not the power of beholding the future. For who of us if we could would not view our life to its close. If it is to be happy it is well that we do not know it; if it is to be wretched it is better still that we be kept in ignorance of it.

Clifton Steadman's life was one that seemed without a parallel in point of reverses, especially for one of only sixteen years. He had never been truly happy, and how unfortunate it is to be made wretched in early youth. It plants a melancholy



expression on the face, and renders one totally insensible to any emotions of joy.

The future of Mr. Steadman's family was at this period indeed gloomy. He had not secured, nor had he sought to secure, any business. His wife was now the sole support of the family. He had been offered a large school, which he refused. He had a finished education, and could he be persuaded to give teaching his attention, he no doubt would have attained great success; but he seemed to have lost all of his former energy, and displayed an utter indifference to everything, which was attributable to his excessive drinking. All his refined and dignified elements of character had become so blunted that he was insensible to his duties as a father and husband.







## CHAPTER IV.

We cannot measure joys but by their loss;  
When blessings fade away we see them then;  
Our richest clusters grow around the cross,  
And in the night time angels sing to men.

—*Anonymous.*

WINTER has laid her icy fetters by. The birds which had migrated to more congenial climes had returned, and were singing with joyous praise the welcome of spring.

The village school had closed, and with it the happiest days of Clifton's life. He was now at work upon a rented farm. He had buried the last hopes he entertained of ever resuming his studies at school. His father had rented part of the same farm that had once been his own, and had moved to one of the cottages that was formerly occupied by one of his tenants. What a change of circumstances! What a change of prospects! Living right in the midst of those who had formerly manifested a love that was bestowed with apparent sincerity.



The old mansion which was daily presented to his view seemed more lovely to him than when it was his own. There were tall green trees, spreading their leafy branches; there in the midst stands the beautiful, the grand old mansion. The house was built with large, deep windows, stone balconies and verandas. Beautiful roses and flowers of almost every variety grew in rich profusion, in narrow borders, around the edge of the verandas. It was complete in every respect. Now that it was no longer his, he could see its beauties more than ever before.

There was a lawn in front of the house, with large, stately trees; and in this lawn was an artificial mound and a miniature lake, whose waters, in the sunshine, glistened like burnished gold. Here and there, on the edge of the lake, were large and choice rose bushes and lilacs, which formed a most lovely picture.

The place had always been filled with mirth and sunshine until the past year. Mr. Steadman would stand and gaze in mute admiration and



drink in the beauty of the scene, and his eyes would fill with tears to know that this grand old palace was no longer his.

All the happiness and enjoyment that his former prosperity had rendered was not appreciated until now. Ah! when we are surrounded by all that makes life happy, we become so surfeited that the heart loses those emotions of pleasure that at first seemed an ecstasy which could never lose its force or stimulus. But let the heart which has grown weary meet with misfortune, and it is then, and only then, that it can be made to realize that—

“Were there no night we could not read the stars,  
The heavens would turn into a blinding glare;  
Freedom is best seen through prison bars,  
And rough seas make the haven passing fair.”

Mr. Steadman asked Mr. Lapell to endorse him for what supplies he needed for the coming year, he felt that he had so often befriended him that he would not hesitate to give him whatever assistance he could. But Mr. Lapell had heard so many accounts of his drinking that he mistrusted him, and



demanded a mortgage or some security. Mr. Steadman could not give him a mortgage for he did not possess any property, except a few household goods, and a mortgage on these would have been no protection to Mr. Lapell, as such property by the laws of this State would have been exempt from all attachments.

Mr. Stanley having heard of Mr. Steadman's efforts to obtain supplies, volunteered his services and he assumed all responsibility for what was needed to carry on the farming.

Mrs. Steadman had resolved to do all the housework, also to sew, or do anything in her power to contribute to the support of the family. She had arranged and fitted up their humble little home, and made it pretty without and neat and inviting within; everything wore an air of comfort. She sought to make her husband and his boy happy; she was striving to make their home happy regardless of poverty.

Ah! when the heart of man is distressed, or when misfortune overtakes him, it often crushes



the last hope of his life and he will give up to sorrow, and, with all the strength and bravery of which he boasts, he will sink beneath its weight like some weak and tender child.

But the heart of woman—noble woman—will brave misfortunes and wear a smile to cheer the hearts of those dear to her. She is termed “the weaker vessel,” and in some respects she is, but when the hour of misfortune comes she is always braver than man; while man’s association with the busy world is enough to divert or beguile his thoughts, woman, the companion of her own thoughts, left to herself, surrounded by all the “ills that flesh is heir to,” will wear a smile to cheer the hearts of those who are dearest to her, and let not the world know the anguish of her heart.

“There is a peculiar tenderness in the love of wife, a sister, and a mother that transcends all other affections of the human heart. It can neither be chilled by selfishness nor daunted by danger, weakened by unworthiness nor stifled by in-



gratitude. She will sacrifice every pleasure for her children or husband. She will glory in their fame, exult in their prosperity, and, if adversity and misfortune overtake them, they will be dearer from misfortune ; and, if disgrace settle upon their names, she will still love and cherish them ; and, if all the world besides should cast them off, she will endeavor to be all the world to them.

“ Woman’s charms are many and powerful. A blushing bride awakens interest and admiration. The charms of maternity is more sublime than all else. Heaven has imprinted in the mother’s face something beyond this world. The angelic smile, the tender look, the watching, wakeful eye which keeps its fond vigil over the slumbering babe is beautiful and sublime.

“ Woman has been charged with inconstancy. It has been said : ‘ Frailty, thy name is woman.’ How untrue and how unjust. Should the man upon whom she has bestowed her affection be overtaken with misfortune, or even disgrace, his father and his brothers may disown him, and cast



him forever from their affection, but the heart of her who has loved as only a woman *can love* will cling to him with tenderness; she will remain true through disgrace and shame. But if poor woman sins but once she is thrust forever from the heart that had pledged devotion."

In all the ages of the world's history woman has been man's ministering and guardian angel. She has not taken in her hands the reins of government, nor has she gone to legislatures to make laws to govern society; but the principles she has instilled into the hearts of men have made them what they are. All the heroes of the past whose names have come thundering down the years of time have been made by their wives or by their mothers. Then all that we are, or all that we may ever hope to be ought to be attributed to her influence.

"The saddest thing that can befall a soul  
Is when it loses faith in God and woman.  
Lost I those gems,  
Though the world's throne stood empty in my path,  
I would go wandering back into my childhood  
Searching for them with tears."



Mrs. Steadman had tried to raise her boy to be a wise, honest and christian gentleman. She had made a companion of him and had taught him to love her, and he had learned to love his mother to such an extent that he never cared to be absent from her. He never left home in search of pleasure, as home had been indeed the dearest place on earth to him. His character had become like that of his mother's, and he was regarded the most exemplary boy in the county. His ambition was for a different vocation from the one that he was now following. He was not satisfied with the idea of being a farmer, though he loved the solitude of the forests—nothing delighted him more than hunting and fishing. He was also delighted with the beauty of the broad fields of waving grain; they had great charms for him. He loved the free and balmy air of the country village, but with all its charms and attractions he had no desire to pursue it as an occupation, yet he entered it with a cheerful heart.

Mr. Steadman had now given himself up to



drinking, and was more of a burden than an assistance to his family; he had almost broken the heart of his wife and brought the greatest humiliation upon his son.

It seemed that he could not be persuaded to give up this pernicious habit of drinking, and his friends had almost given him up as a hopeless inebriate.

This noble wife of his seemed to have no power to control his thirst for drink; she had wept at his feet, she had pictured to him the darkest scenes of misery and wretchedness to which such a course as he was pursuing would inevitably bring upon them, but all seemed of no avail.

One night she had been kept up waiting for his return, and after the night had almost past he came, but in a state of intoxication. Clifton had sat up with his mother until he had grown so weary with waiting that he fell asleep. After she had given Mr. Steadman a warm supper, which she had prepared with her own hands, she thought she would venture to reprove him for his drinking.



“Mr. Steadman, I have something I wish to talk to you about, will you promise not to take offense?”

“I suppose you wish to talk to me about my drinking. I *have* been drinking, and intend to continue doing so if I wish. This is no one's business but my own. You are not furnishing what I spend for drink, and I cannot see why you wish to meddle with my business.”

These words pierced the heart of Mrs. Steadman and produced a keener pang than had a dagger pierced it. It was so unlike Mr. Steadman, he had always been kind to his wife and would sacrifice his individual pleasure for her, but now he had become a changed man. His affection was dead, and his feelings had become so blunted by the contaminating effects of whiskey that he had become unkind and even cruel.

Regardless of the wound that these cruel words had inflicted she continued: “Do you remember, Mr. Steadman, the sacred vows you made me when you sought my affection? Do you remember the



solemn promise you made at the marriage altar to always love and provide for me? You are too honorable, I hope, to disregard this sacred obligation, though you should lose your affection for me. My sorrows, without such a course as you are now pursuing, would be almost more than I am able to bear, but with this great anguish added to it you cannot expect me to survive them long. How can you endure to see my crushed heart thus rudely probed? While we have to meet such a misfortune as the loss of our means, I think it becomes your duty to bear bravely up and try to relieve me and not seek to torture me. I have always been kind, faithful and true to you ; every care of yours has been mine, and I might still be happy with all our loss with any show of kindness. Yes, if you would but quit this awful habit of drinking and smile upon me, I would forget all my sorrows and be happy with you again. When a woman's heart has been bruised as mine, nothing save the tender words of love and praise can heal it. Mr. Steadman, you have always been so kind



and tender of me, you have always been so brave, and now when your family needs your every assistance, brace up—be a man. Now in the name of God I beseech you, to-night, to give up this habit and never touch liquor again. Indulgence in this only leads to want, disgrace and misery. Clifton, poor boy, has discovered that you have taken to drink and it almost breaks the boy's heart. Now, for his sake, for mine, for God's and for your own, promise me that you will never drink another drop."

Mr. Steadman, though still under the influence of liquor, was evidently moved. He hesitated a moment and then replied :

"Helen, I shall not tell you that I will never drink again, but I will try to keep from it. I know that this is wrong, but since I have formed this habit I feel at times that I could not live if I did not resort to the bowl."

How strange, how sad to see a man become so oppressed with sorrow that he would admit that it was more than he could endure. He had been an



exemplary christian, but that once joyous heart of his had almost lost all of its refined feeling. It seems that if the weak and tender-hearted wife could survive such misfortunes that he should be able to bear them with equal equanimity and courage. This might serve to show us that man, with all his boasted courage and bravery, and all his christian resignation, may learn of weak and timid woman a lesson of resignation and courage.

The reverses of fortune have driven wise men mad, insane, and have caused them to drift with a rapid stride to the lowest point of ruin and degradation.

Woman may be taken from the happy fireside of her home to distant lands. It may have been a home of luxury and happiness, yet will she leave it forever, with all those dear friends of her childhood, and cast her lot among "strangers in a strange land" to be with the man upon whom she has bestowed her affection.







## CHAPTER V.

It was a bright and beautiful day early in October. Clifton had returned from his labor when he received the sad intelligence that his friend's effort to secure him a collegiate course was a failure. None felt more disappointed than Laverne, who, though separated from her cousin, still cherished for him an unselfish affection.

Clifton had spent a year at hard work and had managed the business well. His father, having lost all interest in his home, spent most of his time in Gunville, laying around the saloons and streets, drunk. Clifton's hands had become brown and hard. He had grown to be tall and slender.

During the summer he was prostrated with brain fever, and had a slight sun-stroke while at work in the field. All this trouble impaired his mind, but the vigor of his youth came to the rescue and he was soon himself again.



After the labors of the year had been completed he went to Gunville and settled all his accounts, and found that they were even poorer than at the beginning of the year. This, however, was not from extravagance, for they had lived in the plainest possible manner, but the one thing that had absorbed all their profits was the insatiable King Alcohol.

During his ride home Clifton had time for reflection, and concluded that he had much to be thankful for, and when he met his mother, who was at the gate waiting for him, he called out:

“I have good news for you, mother. Mr. Lapell has offered me a clerkship in his elegant store, and Mr. Stanley advises me to take the position. He says he is sure you can get a good private school in Gunville. Shall we move to town, mother?”

“My dear boy, I fear that city life will not suit you, and I know I do not like it. I have always been accustomed to the balmy fresh air of the country; yet, if it is for the best, I will go.



My only pleasure is in ministering to your comfort. I think I will not be with you long."

"Oh, mother, do not talk that way. It would break my heart to give you up. I have had so much trouble, and you are so dear to me."

"My girlhood was one unbroken scene of happiness and pleasure, and when I married your father he was wealthy, noble and good. But, ah! what have I now to look forward to? Nothing, save a miserable remnant of life. And your poor father, we do not even know where he is."

"Do not grieve, dear mother; I can and will support you, and father may yet reform and return to us."

"I cannot think so. If he could forsake us in our hour of deepest gloom there is no hope that he will ever reform."

"This is a very great burden you have to bear; you deserve a better fate. If father loves drink better than he loves you it is better that he should not return."

"Clifton, you are too young to fully under-



stand my feelings. I love him for what he has been to me."

"Your lot, mother, is indeed a sad one; but let us look to God—He will not let us suffer. I want you to depend upon me; I will never forsake you. You are dearer to me than any other living creature, and should I ever attain to any eminence in this world it will be through your influence and training. The lessons you taught me when I was a child will be remembered by me through life, and whatever I do will be with the firm belief that you would approve. When you get away from the scenes of your former happiness and form new attachments you will feel better. You, I am sure, will feel much better when we are out of sight of our old home. Our prospects are so much better than they have been for some, and I feel that all will yet be well."

It was with a sad heart that Mrs. Steadman bade farewell to her few remaining friends and looked for the last time upon her dear old home.

Mr. Gladwell gave them all the assistance they



needed in moving, and they were soon snugly ensconced in their city home. The sale of their live stock and farm implements brought them in sufficient money to make them comfortable until Clifton's salary was due, and Mrs. Steadman soon had a very good select school.

Clifton was better satisfied than formerly and seemed more like other boys. There were many things in the city to interest him. He became a member of several literary societies and a member of the Y. M. C. A. He had now very little time for gloomy thoughts and Laverne was crowded out of his memory most of the time. He loved her still but not with the same intensity.

Fortune was beginning to smile upon them once more. They were fortunate to possess such friends as the Stanleys, who at once introduced them to a circle of select and refined people. It was natural to suppose that the course Mr. Steadman was pursuing would injure Clifton and his mother, but their merit was recognized and rewarded regardless of this.



The selection of associates is one of the most important things in life. We are judged by the society we keep, therefore, it is wise to select the best.

Mrs. Steadman had recovered some of her former cheerfulness, and at times was almost happy, but this could not last. The bright rays of hope and light that now gleamed upon their pathway would only serve to make the coming nights of sorrow darker.

Six months after Mrs. Steadman and Clifton had been established in their new home the postman brought them one evening a black-bordered letter. Their first thoughts were of Mr. Steadman but the letter was from Mrs. Gladwell, and was as follows:

*My dear Sister*—It is with a sad and contrite heart that I write you. My precious Laverne has passed beyond the pearly gates and left us disconsolate. She had a congestive chill from which she never rallied, although everything the most skilled physicians could do was done for her.



She was the light and joy of our home, and she has left us shrouded in gloom. I cannot feel reconciled to my loss. Look where I may there is something to remind me of her. She asked to see Clifton just before she died, but it was too late to send for him. They were such good friends, I wish she could have seen him. Pray for us, dear sister, that He who "tempers the winds to the shorn lamb" may have mercy upon us and unite us in heaven. Your affectionate sister,

MARY.

Mrs. Steadman and Clifton had read the letter together, and when they fully realized that Laverne was dead their grief was very great. Clifton was inconsolable, and wept as if his heart would break.

"Why did they not send for me? Oh, mother, how can I endure this? How can God be merciful and thus afflict me?"

'Come, obscure death,  
And wind me in thy all-embracing arms!  
Like a fond mother, hide me in thy bosom,  
And rock me to the sleep from which none awake!'"



“ Ah, my son, the frozen current of your soul will soon melt and become warm and genial, and life will yet be happy to you. God often afflicts us to teach us that we cannot depend upon ourselves, but must to Him and follow wherever He leads us. Laverne is not dead. The good can never die. She will live in your memory and her spirit will be a beacon light to guide your footsteps in the path of virtue. No, Clifton, she is not dead.

‘There is no death! The stars go down  
To shine upon some fairer shore,  
And bright in Heaven’s jeweled crown  
They shine forever more.  
There is no death! The leaves may fall,  
The flowers may fade and pass away;  
They only wait through wintry hours  
The coming of the May!’ ”

“ Mother, I feel that if I could go to the church-yard where they have laid Laverne and pour my sorrow out where her lingering spirit may behold, I feel that I would find relief.”

“ No, no, Clifton.

‘To stand beside that new-made mound, and feel  
That within that cell is locked forever up



The precious honey, gathered drop by drop  
From out the fairest flower-fields of your soul ;  
Low and desolate to cast yourself,  
In this white city of the silent, down  
Beside that cold, forbidding marble door,  
And feel yourself forever shut away  
From that which was your dearest and your own ;  
To know, however earnestly you knock,  
That door will ne'er be opened unto you ;  
To know the dweller there will never step  
Beyond the boundary of that cruel gate ;  
To know, howe'er you plead, no lip therein  
Will break into its old accustomed smile,  
The folded hands stretch out no welcoming,  
The fastened eyelids will never lift themselves  
Again in answering anguish or glad love,  
From out the frozen bondage of their sleep,  
Would give you but a strange, cold pang of woe.'

Clifton, as the years roll by you will find this love to be perishing, and that your heart, like the tendrils of some vine, will twine itself around some other heart."

"Ah, no, dear mother ; I would rather be a slave and do the bidding of a tyrant master than to try and feed upon the hope that my love will revive. Love, like the tender flower when once withered, can never be made to bloom again. The tears of affection and the hand of kindness



may warm it into life again, but that vigor and life that made it strong will be gone. The brightness of the eyes will be faded, and often while alone we will somehow wander back in memory's path searching for the smile that first made us feel what it was to love; yet we may know the sweet face that bore that smile is cold in death—memory, in spite of reason, will take us back to the scene and to the hour where we first felt the influence of love."

"It may, Clifton, for awhile; but when we have submitted to a stroke of fate like this, when we have taken our sorrow to the Lord, and believing with an unfaltering faith that He will endure it all for us, and asking Him to pour the balm of mercy upon our broken hearts, he will heal every wound. Take these words with you wherever you go and you will find a sweet comfort in them: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.'



‘Trust in the Lord, do good, and verily thou shalt be fed.’

“Then, Clifton, those who mourn are not only to be comforted, but they are to be blessed. Clifton, do as I have always done, take all your sorrows to the Lord; He will strengthen and uphold you. When you have finished this life and completed the purpose for which God gave it, you will be taken to that happy home where parting never comes—where we shall dwell forever with the blessed.

It is sweet, my boy, to meet above,  
To meet and part no more,  
To meet the faithful friends we loved  
In this dark world below.”

“Mother, my heart is so crushed and broken now that I feel it would be impossible to lay aside this affliction, but I shall look to God and ask him to sustain me. Your sweet words have given me some relief. I know that God will help us to bear our troubles. I have always noticed that when you were most afflicted that you prayed most, and I do not believe that tender heart of yours would



have survived these cruel strokes of fate without strength and courage from above."

This was the first dark shadow that had ever fallen upon the life of Clifton. He had been cumbered with many cares for one of his years, but all former troubles, when compared with this, lost their significance.

When Clifton repaired to his room that night he locked the door, and, opening his trunk, took from it many little tokens of Laverne's affection. He read every note she had ever written him, and his feelings became so worked up that he drifted into a state of desperation. He resolved to end his miserable existence. He wrote a note to leave upon his table, which was to explain the cause of his death to his mother. But just as he was in the act of placing a knife to his breast, he heard some one tapping at his door. He hurriedly threw the knife out of sight and unlocked the door and found it to be his mother, who said: "Clifton, why do you not retire. I have heard you walking the floor for several hours. Kiss me



good night, my boy, I feel sorry for you. Ask God to comfort and bless you before you retire. ”

He kissed his mother, and closing the door, took his seat. He was halting between two opinions. He thought of his mother and how sad her fate would be should he leave her in the world alone to battle for herself. On the other hand, to drag out such a miserable existence as he had pictured his to be, he thought was more than he could endure.

He remembered having heard his mother say that those who died by their own hands could never enter the portals of Heaven. That decided him. He would live for his mother ; and go forth in the world and establish a *name*.

When Clifton arose the following morning he felt so much relieved that he resumed his business. His sad expression was observed by all his friends in the store, and it was the means of exciting the sympathy of his friend, Earnest Burton. The warmest friendship had sprung up between Clifton and Earnest. They were in the same store and



were constantly thrown together. Clifton unfolded to him his new sorrow. Earnest paid him every attention that he could ; assisted him in his work, and was so pleasant and congenial that Clifton felt he had been truly blessed in finding such a kind, noble and worthy friend.

I will now introduce to my readers the Burton family. Mr. Burton was one of the first men of Gunville. He had been successful in business, and was genial and hospitable, and a kind, christian gentleman. He had two reasons for taking Mrs. Steadman to board. One was the sympathy he had for her, the other for the good influence she would have upon his children.

Mrs. Burton was a mild lady, quite fashionable, but a pure christian. Their oldest child, Earnest, was not so brilliant in intellect as his parents could have wished, but was a manly, upright boy, and bade fair to make a good business man.

Lallie, who was two years Earnest's junior, was all that her fond parents could have wished her to be. The beauty of her form and face were



only rivalled by the beauties of her mind. Her loving parents had lavished upon her every advantage within their power, and she was now in the bloom of youth and beauty.

There were three other children, Mary, Joe and Arthur, aged respectively, eleven, nine and seven years. This composed the happy family in which Mrs. Steadman and Clifton had been so fortunate as to have their abode for the past six months. Truly their lives had fallen in pleasant places, yet they were not perfectly happy. There was still that shadow hanging over them. A drunken husband and father. And now they had yet another sorrow to add to the one which was already so hard to bear.







## CHAPTER VI.

“His Resolve

Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore  
Prayer from a living source within the will,  
And beating up through all the bitter world,  
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,  
Kept him a living soul.”

Clifton resolved that he would never die by his own hands, and he prayed earnestly to God to sustain him. He was resolved that he would give himself to God and connect himself with the church. He found that he could bear his trouble better, and felt that if he could never meet Laverne on earth, he would live so that when he was called from earth and its sorrows, he would meet her where there is no parting.

Clifton's life began to brighten again. The sorrows that had fallen so thick and fast upon his young life had given him a sad but sweet expression, and a gentleness of tone and manner. Being now constantly employed through the day, and at



night surrounded with such happy associates, and seeing his mother so much better contented, Clifton felt that he had at last been blessed. He, Earnest and Lallie would assemble in the sitting room after supper very often and engage in plays of some kind until bed-time. Lallie knew of the death of Laverne, and without ever referring to her, she did all in her power to divert his attention from his trouble. She could not endure to see any one sad.

One night, after supper was over, Clifton and Lallie were in the sitting room alone. Earnest and the other children had gone with their mother and Mrs. Steadman to visit a neighbor, and as Clifton did not want to go Lallie consented to stay with him till they returned. Lallie was extremely entertaining; she was very fond of literature, and could converse with Clifton better upon this subject, and seemed to enjoy it more than any young lady he had ever met.

During the course of conversation Clifton asked her did she think that any one could ever recover from disappointed love, to which she replied:



“Well, Mr. Steadman, I think this depends greatly upon the nature of the affection, and the capability of the one who meets with such a misfortune. There are people who do not love wisely because they love extravagantly. With those the tender emotion becomes too violent to be lasting. There are others who are such lovers of novelty that they find new beauty in the face of every one they meet. They have no capability for love, and a reverse in their affection would be of little consequence. But take a person of earnest disposition, who looks more at the virtues of the one he is about to select to bestow his affection upon, who is slow and cautious in the bestowal of his esteem, and his affection will, I think, invariably prove lasting, because one that is slow to form an opinion will be slow to change it.”

Clifton had not referred to this question in a way that would cause Lallie to suspect that he had been disappointed in love. The subject had sprang iuvoluntarily in the course of conversation, and without answering or commenting upon what she



had said, he remarked: "Well then, Lallie, do you think it is well for one who has lost the object of his love by death to try to become insensible to a similar feeling in future?"

"No, I do not. I think a man's affection must be quite shallow that can be exhausted with one bestowal. It is natural to be grieved at the loss of esteem, and no true heart can bear the loss of affection without sorrow; but to go through life with a broken heart from such a cause would, I think, show

'A heart unfortified, an understanding  
Simple and unschooled.'

Mr. Steadman, I suppose you have read Shelley?"

"Yes, and with great pleasure."

"Well you remember in his *Epipsychidion* he says:

'Narrow is  
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,  
The life that wears, the spirit that creates,  
One object and one form, and builds thereby  
A sepulchre for its eternity.'

"Yes, and N. P. Willis, equally as good authority, says:



‘Man may bear with suffering; his heart  
Is a strong thing, and God-like in the grasp  
Of pain that wrings mortality; but tear  
One chord affection clings to, part one tie  
That binds him unto woman’s delicate love,  
And his great spirit yieldeth like a reed.’

But, Lallie, I am inclined to be of your opinion; I think that when the tendrils of affection have been torn from the object to which it clung, it will seek another support and cling the fonder, as the interruption will only serve to sweeten the joys of its new life—its new support.”

More than a year had elapsed since Laverne’s death, and Clifton had become entirely reconciled to his loss. He and Lallie were congenial in their tastes and had become fast friends. His admiration of her accomplishments were unbounded, and having similar tastes they spent many pleasant hours together.

Mr. Burton’s library was large and well selected. Many of the books had been bought for Lallie, and the library was considered hers, as she was the only literary child of the family.

When Mrs. Steadman, Mrs. Burton and the



children returned they found Clifton and Lallie at the library looking at the books. When Clifton retired that night he could not sleep. There was a strange feeling pervading his heart. He wondered why his affection had gone out to Lallie, and why he had become reconciled to the loss of Laverne. He knew he could love Lallie with propriety, she suited him so well, and he knew that the love he had cherished for Laverne was wrong.

Clifton realized that it would be impossible for him not to love Lallie, and this night's conversation with her had kindled a flame within his breast that would grow brighter as the days rolled by. He now realized that the feeling he had for Laverne was not a natural love, but only a boyish fancy, which he had nourished more in his imagination than in his heart. Laverne had been a constant companion, noble, lovely and pure, and Clifton was lonely and sad.

If the heart be oppressed let kindness be shown,  
And it will kindle the fire of love in the breast;



For the heart becomes tender whenever it mourns,  
And goes searching for some one to love and caress.

Like the young bird blown by the storm from its nest,  
It will cling just as close to the nest of some other,  
And nestle the same to any warm breast,  
As to the breast of its own tender mother.—*Cary.*

Clifton compared his life to a long night of darkness, which vanishing, gives place to the beautiful sunshine of a perfect day. Mr. Lapell had become very much attached to Clifton, and made him chief clerk of his store.

Mrs. Steadman was apparently happy, though she bore a silent sorrow which none but Clifton could appreciate. She had heard several times from her husband, but not by letter, and when she heard from him it was always something to grieve her. She had given him up as a hopeless inebriate, and was determined to bear all her sorrow silently and do the best she could; yet at times she felt that her heart would break when she thought of her once noble husband tramping about the country almost in rags. She had seen from a paper that Mr. Steadman had been arrested for theft,



and that he was under the assumed name of William Proctor, not so much to cover what few crimes he had committed while drunk; but even in his depravity he had some respect for the feelings of his wife and son, and he had taken an *alias* to prevent those whom he met from knowing him as William G. Steadman, a once noble and happy man who had been a friend to the poor and a father to the orphan, and who was highly cultured and refined. In the days of his prosperity none would have thought it possible for such a noble and worthy character to have thus fallen.

But, alas! there is many a home equally as happy as his, and many a heart as true and generous, that has been wrecked and ruined by the rum fiend. There is no home that it cannot darken; there is no heart that it cannot drive to sin and crime, and there is no mind that it cannot dement. Its very name is suggestive of contamination and misery. It is a two-fold injury: it injures those who use it, and it injures helpless and defenceless mothers, wives and children. There cannot be a



more vivid picture of ruin and misery than the once happy home brought to sadness and suffering by the influence of this awful curse. Under its influence the brightness of a mother's smile, the bloom of her fair cheek, will fade and disappear like the delicate hues of some tender flower that has been plucked by rude hands and thrown beneath the feet to be trampled in the dust. The merry voices of sweet and innocent youth have been hushed, and the bright smiles on their faces have changed to a sickly, solemn mien by the influence of this soul destroyer. Then tell me not it is a balm for broken hearts. Every care it buries rises again, bringing with it ten thousand more.

Then "it is better to bear the ills we have" than suffer those which rum will bring. It has filled prisons with murderers. It has kindled a thousand fires. It has driven wise men mad, and has robbed ten thousand trusting hearts of pure and sacred love. Then tell me not, O, man! made in the image of thy God, that it is a panacea for the pain that sorrow brings.



Mrs. Steadman had one hope to sustain her. She believed God would reclaim her husband and send him back to her. With all his faults she still had a place in her heart for him. Through all her humiliation and sorrow Clifton had proven a noble, affectionate son. He was now rising in the world and would be a strong support for her to lean upon in the days of her infirmity.

Mr. Lapell had given him almost entire control of his business, for he had discovered that he possessed great executive ability, and he also felt that it was his duty to do all in his power for Clifton, as his prosperity was the price of Mr. Steadman's downfall.

Clifton was developing into manhood and had become one of the most popular young men in Gunville. He had studied hard during all his leisure hours and was now qualified to adorn the very highest circles of society. He was polished in his manners and was very brilliant and fluent in conversation. He had grown tall and large, and was very erect and dignified, graceful in his



movements, handsome in form, and his head was symmetrically proportioned. He had black hair and brown eyes, was neat in his dress but not dandish; he had overcome his former reticence and was very entertaining, but not in the least inclined to flirtation, and cherished an utter contempt for the arrant flirt. While he knew he had few peers he never appeared the least pedantic, but was always reserved and unassuming in the display of his intellect, and was admired by all classes. The attributes of his character were so beautifully blended that he seemed more like the hero of some lovely romance than a character in real life.







## CHAPTER VII.

“Good evening, Mr. Steadman. Walk in; I was practicing the new piece of music you brought me last evening,” said Lallie, as she rose hurriedly from the piano.

“Do not allow me to interrupt you, be seated and play some for me, I am passionately fond of music. I think the piece is perfectly lovely, and you execute it well.”

“Thank you; I, too, think it is pretty, but it is very difficult to render.”

Clifton placed the stool to the piano, which had displaced as she rose to invite him in, and while he stood by her turning the music he could scarcely keep his eyes on the music, they would involuntarily seek to feast themselves upon the loveliness of his companion. Her dark brown hair and lilly-like complexion harmonized with her lovely blue eyes, and, added to the rare grace of



her person, were suggestive of Venus, the fabled goddess of love, grace and beauty. She was dressed in an evening costume of some gauze-like material that Clifton thought the most becoming he had ever seen her wear.

After Lallie had completed the piece of music Clifton thanked her, and gazed at her intently without seeming to be conscious of what he was doing.

“Why do you gaze upon me so, Mr. Steadman? You really embarrass me.”

“Should I tell you you will not, I trust, become offended?”

“Certainly I would not become offended to have you answer a direct question.”

“If I embarrass you by gazing at you, I might embarrass you more by telling you why I did so.”

Lallie blushed, for she felt that he was referring to something that she did not intend to make him tell her.

“Well, Lallie, to answer your question forces



me to appear premature in something that I had thought to reveal more clearly by my actions than I have done. Why I gazed so earnestly was because I love you—yes, love you more than my own life, and since you have unintentionally forced me to tell you this, I think you will be generous enough to pardon my seeming presumption, and not think me premature or judge me unkindly.”

“I shall not judge you unkindly, Mr. Steadman, but I am indeed surprised, and can but think you are mistaken in your feelings. You have loved so many that I think you will find it difficult to determine who you love or whether you love at all.”

Clifton's face flushed crimson and his eyes flashed anger, but he controlled himself enough to say:

“‘I'll swear by the stars above,  
That shine so bright—so clearly,  
That I before have never loved  
A woman half so dearly.’

Lallie, I certainly think you have judged me very unkindly. Your language demands an apology.



You seem to think that I possess no capability for love, and you charge me with inconstancy; all of which is not only unkind, but extremely unjust. You have offended a heart that lays no claim to perfection, but one that does lay claim to honor and true manly principle. There are things that I might be influenced to do, but that of which you accuse me is most foreign and offensive to my sense of honor. You have indirectly accused me of being one of those who would ruthlessly deal with the affections of another. Had you accused me of theft, of murder, or the darkest and most diabolical deed that stains the annals of crime, you could not have incensed me more. I can point to my past life with a clear conscience in matters of this kind. You do not regard me as a gentleman, therefore, I cannot ever expect you to regard me as a friend, and I shall never trouble you with my presence again. Had a proffer of affection been made you by some of the fashionable, shallow-brained fops of the city, you would have felt more flattered than by the offer of an honest heart's esteem



Lallie interrupted him, and said with emphasis: "I am utterly at a loss to understand the real purport of your language. I readily observe now that I spoke too hastily, and really I did not mean to say just what I did. I had been told by a friend that you were a flirt, and to beware of you. I intended to tell you what I had heard of you, and not to tell you that I believed it, for I do not. I do not think it becoming in any young lady to tell a gentleman how she regards him; but rather than have you misjudge me I shall make this breach of propriety. I consider you a true and genuine gentleman; and, of course, you appreciate the fact that the term gentleman comprehends every attribute of character that adorns human nature. So I throw myself upon your mercy for pardon. It has been said: 'To err is human, to forgive divine, and he who forgives most shall be most forgiven.' Now, permit me to assure you, Mr. Steadman, 'that the head and front of my offendings hath that extent no more'. As to the latter part of your accusation I wish to say, that



you have as unkindly judged me in my fancy for the 'fashionable shallow-brained fops', as you call them, as you seem to think I had misunderstood you in regarding you a flirt, and I shall expect you to retract this, for I know it to be untrue. I may pass my time with those young men very pleasantly. They have been very attentive to me, and I could not be so very rude and unladylike as to treat them discourteously. I know that some of them have plenty of money and few brains, but some of them are real gentlemen, but when it comes to admiring them for their wealth alone I think you judge me rather harshly to think that their appearance or possessions could elicit my affections."

Clifton took her little hand and said: "Lallie, I could not hesitate to forgive you, since you so readily forgive me. I am sorry indeed that I accused you of admiring the fop or dude. You know that when we are angry we speak extravagantly. I, of course, know that many of those young men and ladies in high life are the highest



types of genuine nobleness. Genuine nobleness of heart cannot be altered by all the wealth of the world. When true nobility is found among the rich it is elevating, and will extend the hand of comfort to suffering poverty. The world may feel its influence. And though we may find it in the humble hovel, and hid beneath the tattered garments of some poor laboring wight, it is still the same nobility of character. Ah, it is an insignia for all degrees of life; it is a bond of fraternal strength and tenderness. No, I am not one of those who believe that there is nothing good in the character of the elite."

Some jealous creature had been maligning him, thinking that they would rob him of all chance of winning Lallie's affection, but their nefarious purpose was not accomplished, as the spirited resentment and refutation Clifton offered to the accusation served to impress upon her the idea that the report she had heard of him was untrue, and fully prepared her mind to accept a proffer of his hand. "Lallie, I do not feel that cold formality should



stand between us, then tell me this little hand shall be mine.

‘I would give youth, beauty, fame and splendor,  
My all of life, my every hope resign,  
To make in that young heart one feeling tender,  
To clasp this little hand and call it mine.’”

“Mr. Steadman, you take me so much by surprise that I shall have to ask time to consider this before I give you an answer.”

“Why do you wish to consider it? Have you not known me sufficiently long to determine my character? I was first introduced to you by a gentleman of prominence in our city who had known me all my life.”

“Yes, I know all this, and am fully satisfied of your worthiness of character, but I wish to consider the question because it is a sacred one, and one that no true lady or gentleman should hastily decide.”

“I appreciate all this, Lallie, but to relieve my heart of the excruciating pain of suspense can you not give me one single hope to cherish? Can you not tell me that you will try to love me? Lallie,



look up at me and tell me that I may claim your heart. I love you too tenderly to persuade you to do wrong, but could there be any wrong in your telling me that you love me, if you feel that you do? I know you are young and timid, and it may be embarrassing, but for the sake of one who would die for you, and who loves you more tenderly than your own mother, will you not make this slight compromise in your opinion of propriety? Tell me that you will give me the affection of your young heart, and make a life that has always been sad joyous and happy."

"Mr. Steadman, I really think you are too persistent, and I feel that you have no occasion to suffer suspense, for I have never indicated any feeling that would have caused you to think for a moment that I disliked you, and you are constantly with me. I would so much prefer revelations by actions than by words, and I ask you not to press me for an answer."

"Can you not give me the slightest encouragement?"



“Wait patiently, desire moderately, and all that you reasonably hope for may be accomplished.”

“Lallie, tell me how I am to wait patiently when the waiting is to afflict me with a suspense that is truly painful? How am I to desire moderately when that which I desire is paramount to everything else in life—more valuable than all the gems that lay buried beneath the bosom of the deep—more beautiful than the ‘gorgeous glitter of a crown,’ more beautiful than Aurora’s golden beams glittering upon the dews of night. Yes, more valuable is that which I desire than all these—the sacred love of woman’s noble heart. Then tell me not to ‘wait patiently and desire moderately!’”

“Mr. Steadman, I appreciate your estimation of woman’s love. There are few men capable of knowing just what is comprehended in the question, give me thine heart? It means, go with me through all the dark hours of life, it means to suffer for another’s sake, it means that when that



heart for which you ask grows old that it is to be as lovely as in its youth, and that its age will give it both strength and beauty, it means that when that heart is still and cold in death that we shall honor the memory of its love and watch for its spirit to beckon us to that eternal realm of light where it has gone to dwell forever. Love, like the soul, is immortal, and when death lays its chilling hand upon the heart of love it then becomes the life and spirit of the soul, and goes on to dwell with it in eternity. It is the music of souls that gather around the throne of God."

"Yes, Lallie, love is sweet ; it is purifying and beautiful. It is the grandest attribute of the human heart, a radiant light that guides our footsteps in virtue's path. Pluck it from the heart of man and he becomes a brute ; take it from the heart of woman and she no longer inspires our admiration. Then, Lallie, do you not believe that I would treasure the affection of your heart ?"

"I believe that you would, Mr. Steadman."

"Then why do you withhold it from me ?"



“ Have I said that I withheld it ? ”

“ You have not spoken it, but you have very plainly demonstrated it. Now, Lallie, forgive me for entreating so earnestly, but tell me that this hand shall be mine, and that your heart, with all of its sacred love, shall be mine. ”

She raised her head, and gazing into his large brown eyes, said :

“ Mr. Steadman, I do not wish to afflict you, but I cannot give you the answer that you desire to-night. ”

“ Then I cannot hope for you to do so in the future, can I ? ”

“ I will tell you some other time. I can not tell you now without making a compromise with my sense of propriety, and this I know you would not have me do. ”

“ I do not consider this propriety. It is cold formality, and I really think you have little regard for my feelings to defer your answer. I shall not afflict you with this question again if you feel that you cannot answer it to-night. ”



“ Well, Mr. Steadman, you may exercise your own pleasure in this, but I wish to assure you that you are not afflicting me with this question. I shall duly consider it and answer when I think I have weighed it sufficiently to answer correctly. I know you expect me to deal honorably with you, and I shall do this, whether you expect it or not. Were I to tell you that I loved you to-night and find in the future that I did not, and then have to tell you so, would be worse than have you wait and tell you I did not love you ; for in the former you would have cause to charge me with dishonor, and in the latter you would be forced to commend me for my candor and honesty. In the future I might be able to answer your question as you desire, but to-night I cannot.”

“ Then you mean to say that you will not.”

“ Well, yes, I will not because I cannot.”

“ You, no doubt, feel that you are justified in deferring your answer, but I cannot see the necessity of it. Were I a stranger to you then you would have some excuse for postponing your de-



cision, but you have known me quite a while, and I cannot see why you wish to further consider the question."

"Mr. Steadman, it is the question I wish to consider, and not that I wish to know more of you. I know you sufficiently to form an opinion of you, but I have not considered this question in any way."

"This being the case, I will try to wait till you can tell. Do you think you can tell me to-morrow night, and will you go with me out to the park?"

"It is probable that I can, and I will be delighted to go to the park."

Clifton looked at his watch and found it was half past ten o'clock, which he knew was bed time, and he also knew that Mrs. Burten did not allow Lallie to entertain later than ten. He remarked that he was keeping her up too late, and after hesitating a moment asked her to kiss him. She said indignantly:

"Mr. Steadman, I thought you regarded me a lady. No, I cannot kiss you, and you have



seriously offended me by asking me to do so."

"I did not intend to give offense, and most humbly beg your forgiveness. You are so very lovely to-night, and I love you so devotedly that I could not refrain from speaking to you as I did."

"No love that you could have for me, and none that I could cherish for you, would justify me in doing such a thing. If we were to be married to-morrow I could not be persuaded to kiss you to-night. You may think strange of this, but I would not. Every person has a right to his opinion of propriety, whether it accords with the opinions of others or not. You must never ask me this again, for if you do you will certainly incur my displeasure to such an extent that you will regret it."

"Lallie, you certainly know that I could not have asked you this had I regarded it the least improper. Please accept my apology. Lallie, it is growing very late and I cannot keep you up any later, so good night."



“Good night, Mr. Steadman, I hope you will rest well.”

“Thank you, Lallie, I shall rest well for I know I will dream of thee; and Lallie, think of what you have promised to tell me to-morrow night.”

Clifton slowly retired from the parlor and left Lallie standing by the piano. He had earnestly hoped that she would promise to love him. It was his intention to marry her just as soon as he could win her affection. Mrs. Steadman, and in fact, all of Mr. Burton's family, had observed his fondness for her, and Mrs. Steadman was delighted to see him bestow his affections upon some one, for he had been so unhappy in his affection for Laverne, or rather his fancy for her.

The feeling he had for Lallie was indeed a mature affection without limit. She had only one fault in his estimation. She was not as true a christian as he desired her to be. He would like to see her as warmly devoted to God's service as his noble mother was, and he had often thought he would talk to her about this. She was not so



worldly-minded as the majority of young ladies of her age, but she was full of vivacity, and fond of dancing and going to operas, which was contrary to his estimation of a true, devout christian.

Mrs. Steadman had won great reputation as a teacher, and Mr. Burton's family had become perfectly devoted to her. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley were good friends, and frequently called to see her and Clifton. Mr. Stanley never lost sight of them in the rush and excitement incident to his extensive practice. He was one of the noblest and truest of men. He had repeatedly importuned Clifton to study law under him; had offered him free access to his library, and to give him all the instruction in his power, but Clifton could be persuaded to pursue law as a profession because it was not congenial to his taste. He had decided to become a merchant, as his experience with Mr. Lapell, as a salesman, had given him a fondness for that occupation. He once thought of becoming a clergyman, but he did not consider his education sufficient to justify him in pursuing this sacred calling.



Mrs. Steadman had heard that her husband had left the country and gone to the west. Mr. Stanley had seen him just before he was to leave, and tried to persuade him to reform and go back to his family, but he had become so degraded that he had lost all principle and all love for his boy and his noble wife. Ah! what a miserable wreck. His eyes were red and swollen, his face bloated, his beard neglected, and his general appearance that of a worthless drunken tramp. His own wife would scarcely have recognized him. What a vivid picture of ruin! Character all gone, manhood wasted. It was enough to cause every one who beheld him to dash the wine cup from their lips as they would the deadly hemlock.

But, ah! is this all? No. Behold the true and noble hearts that it breaks; hearts that are thirsting for the love that was plighted in other, happier days, love that was sworn to be eternal. Then let none imagine there is comfort in the wine cup. There may be a sparkling beauty upon its surface, but there is death, ruin, shame and dis-



honor concealed beneath. Then beware of its deadly fascination !

Those who knew William G. Steadman in his palmy and happy days would never have thought it possible for him to have become so degraded and wrecked. But the rum fiend often selects the brightest gems to manifest its destructive influence. Then why is it that men of wisdom will cling to the cup when they see it leading them with precipitating force down to the very jaws of hell. When it has brought them to the very verge of the yawning sepulchre, and points them to its awaiting embrace, and tells them to choose while they may, they turn their backs, and with eyes fixed upon loved ones, and upon life and happiness, go down, down to a drunkard's grave, a drunkard's hell.







## CHAPTER VIII.

“How beautiful this night! The balmiest sigh  
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear  
Were discord to the speaking quietude  
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,  
Studded with stars unutterably bright,  
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls  
Seems like a canopy which love has spread  
To curtain her sleeping world.”—*Shelley*.

WHEN Lallie and Clifton had taken their seats in the park Clifton quoted the above from Shelley's “Queen Mab.” Lallie looked more beautiful than ever, and Clifton felt an emotion that he had never before experienced. Clifton thus continued to speak in admiration of the beauties of the night in his own simple rhymes :

“The moon's bright rays are gently beaming  
Upon the lovely brow of night,  
And when thus I view it there is a feeling  
That fills my soul with a sweet delight.

There is not one cloud to obstruct a ray  
Of her fair and lucid beams ;  
Her light did ne'er more gently play  
Viewed from the blissful land of dreams.”



Clifton was gazing upon the moon while he repeated his simple verses, and when he had finished he turned, and looking deliberately at Lallie, said :

“Lallie, do you remember what you promised to tell me to-night?”

She blushingly hung her head and said :

“What was it?”

“Why, Lallie! Was your promise to me of such little moment that you have so soon forgotten it? You told me that to-night you would tell me whether I might ever hope for a reciprocation of my love for you.”

“Did I really tell you this, Mr. Steadman?”

“You certainly did or I would not have said so.”

“Well, I wish I had not made that promise.”

“Then you do not love me, and never intend to, I suppose.”

“I did not say that, Mr. Steadman.”

“Then why do you wish that you had not promised to answer me to-night?”



“Well, for this reason: as I previously told you, this I regard as a very sacred question, and I wish to be very cautious in every thought that I give it.”

“Well, Lallie, you have had sufficient time to consider this question, and furthermore, you have had the opportunity of learning every element in my character. I do not wish to worry you with this question, nor have you violate your sense of propriety, but since you have promised to answer me to-night, and since you know me as you do, I shall not only be disappointed, but I shall feel hurt if you do not answer me to-night.”

“Mr. Steadman, will you not bear with me patiently in this; I experience no pleasure in causing you suspense, but be patient and I shall deal honestly with you.”

“Lallie, I have been patient indeed, to wait as I have. I know you will deal honestly with me; had I not thought so, I could never have loved you. Let me beg of you to answer to-night. Tell me that you love me and will be mine.”



“It isn’t necessary for me to tell you, for I could love you without telling you so.”

“But how would I know it?”

“Why I could demonstrate it more fully by my actions than by words, and I would not feel the embarrassment which I would by an open confession.”

“If you really love me, I cannot understand why you would experience the slightest embarrassment in telling me so. Lallie, I would not have you kneel at my feet or make any undue demonstrations, but I regard it a duty you owe me, and one you owe yourself, to tell me that you love me if you really do.”

“I am sorry that we so widely differ in our opinions respecting this matter. Custom and propriety sanction an open confession of love in your sex but not in mine. There are things which you could do with propriety that would not be right at all for me to do. You cannot fail to see this if you will but reflect.”

“Lallie, you know I love you, and I ask you



to marry me. I am sure you would not permit me to think you love me unless you do. I shall strive to give you no occasion to regret the bestowal of your affection. The chief aim of my life shall be to provide for your comfort and make you happy. My life has always been sad—yes, from my earliest childhood I believe I have drank the cup of sorrow to its dregs, but now I have something to hope for—something to live for.”

“Yes, your life has been one of many sorrows, and I do not think there is another young man of my acquaintance who would have endured it all as bravely as you have done. I know what your sorrows have been, and without any intention of flattery, I must say I think you deserve all the praise that could possibly be expressed.”

“Thank you, Lallie; I appreciate your estimation of me, and hope that I will never under the most adverse circumstances prove myself unworthy of the good opinion you have of me. It is a great pleasure to me to receive this compliment. I care nothing for the compliment of being thought hand-



some, but when I receive one to my character, and can feel that it is deserved, I always appreciate it.

“I have so often observed that there is such wonderful influence exerted upon the heart by trouble or misfortune. It seems to be the chief method that God employs to test us. There are many hearts too weak to bear up bravely under a heavy stroke of misfortune. They have no courage, nor have they any faith in God, and when He places a burden upon them, they sink beneath it and complain of His injustice and become desperate, forgetting that ‘God loveth whom He chasteneth.’ After one has been cumbered with care, and looking around them for relief, failing to find it, they look to God, and He heals the broken heart and gives them joy in resignation to His will that they would never have experienced had they always been blessed with a life of wealth.

“I am of the same opinion. I believe that the worst condition to which we can be subjected, as far as our spiritual welfare is concerned, is to have every luxury and pleasure that life can afford. We



feel no need of God's assistance. This is supported and verified by holy writ. Agur, in the confession of his faith, you remember, says: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny Thee and say, who is the Lord?'

"Yes, he also asked that he be not poor, that he might not be tempted to steal. Riches and poverty are both great stumbling blocks to the progress of christian life, but I do not consider that misfortune or trouble are, for this may come to either the rich or the poor, and it often leads them 'to feel their dependence upon God'."

"Lallie, I am glad to know you read the Bible, and that you have faith in God. I trust you will pardon me for saying so, but I have often thought that you never gave the salvation of your soul a thought, and wanted to talk to you on the subject, but was afraid I would give you offense. We will be more congenial to be of similar thought and feeling in reference to this great and important question."



“I cannot see why you had formed that opinion of me. I have always studied the Bible, and, of course, you know I was reared under religious influences. My father and mother both are warm and devout christians.”

“Yes, but you seem to be so fond of dancing and going to operas, and so full of fun and mischief. Now, I feel that I have the right to council you a little, and I want you to promise that you will never dance again, and stop going to operas. Will you make me that promise, Lallie? It may be hard for you to promise this, but it would not if you thought of it as I do.”

“I can really see no harm in these things. They are considered very harmless amusements; but, as you desire it, I will promise that I will try to give them up.”

“Lallie, this is indeed a pleasant topic and a profitable one, but as it can be talked of at home, let us refer to the old subject. I brought you here for the purpose of asking you to marry me. You may consider me persistent, but I have no



other apology to offer than that I love you."

"Mr. Steadman, I thought you were satisfied with the encouragement I gave you, and I do not think you are manifesting much confidence in what I have said and what I have demonstrated to remain in doubt."

"Then I shall not remain in doubt; but please excuse me for insisting upon an answer to-night. It is growing late, and we have but a short while to remain here, and another opportunity may not be offered us soon."

"I am not prepared to answer to-night; I must consult mother first."

"Lallie, this is a question that you alone must decide. No one can select a life companion for you; yet I fully appreciate the feeling you have about referring this to your parents, for we should never take any important step in life without seeking their advice. We should first make our choice and then seek our parents' approval, but we should attempt to make a choice that they could approve. I flatter myself with the belief that your



parents could not have the slightest objection to me, for I have never given them cause to question my integrity."

"Yes, Mr. Steadman; I know that mother and father esteem you very highly, for I have often heard them speak of you in very flattering terms, but they may not be willing for me to marry anyone."

"Well, will you promise me you will speak to your parents, and if they consent you will set the day for our marriage?"

"Why, Mr. Steadman! I certainly deem you very premature; I have not been afforded sufficient time to answer so soon as you insist."

While Clifton did not receive a direct promise from Lallie, yet he felt fully assured that all would be well with him in the future.

Clifton had become the principal factor in Mr. Lapell's store. The purchasing of all supplies was left entirely with him, and Mr. Lapell never took stock in any new adventure or enterprise without first consulting Clifton, whose advice had



in every instance proved satisfactory and profitable. Clifton had for some time been sleeping at the store and taking his meals at an uptown hotel. This change was necessary since the increase of his business required more of his time, but he disliked it on account of being separated from Lallie and his mother.

Mr. Stanley had again importuned Clifton to take up the study of law, but Clifton felt that the mercantile business suited him best, and, as Mr. Lapell had promised to give him a small start in business, he could not consider it prudent to take up the study of law, especially after having such promises made him. And, too, the business had become very congenial and he determined to settle upon it.

A few evenings after Clifton had asked Lallie to marry him he called at the house of Mr. Burton to see his mother. He had previously told her of his affection for Lallie, but had not told of his intention to marry her. So he took this occasion to tell her all about it and to ask her approval. He



said: "Now, mother, I want your approval. I have always profited by your advice and I would not act in any measure or matter that did not meet your approbation."

"Well, my son, if you feel that you love Lallie, and think that she will make you happy, and that she will suit you, I see no reason why I should object. I dislike to give you up. I feel that there will be some other to share your affection, and that you cannot or probably will not love me the same. I have observed it through life, that when children marry they apparently lose a part of their devotion for their parents, and I guess it is right, for the Good Book says, that 'A man shall forsake father and mother and cleave to his wife.' Yet this injunction, divine as it is, is indeed hard for me to accept. Clifton, I do not think I would feel so grieved to give you up if I only had some one to cling to. My husband has forsaken me and when you are married I shall feel that I have companion. You have strengthened, sustained and supported me in my bereavement, and I feel



that I cannot be happy when you have left me. Clifton, my dear son, you cannot imagine how I hate to give you up."

"Mother, I am sorry that you are so grieved about my marrying, and that you feel that I shall love you less when I am married. Of course, it will be my sacred duty to love my wife, but the performance of that duty will not necessitate an estrangement of my feelings for you. And you shall never be made to feel that I love you less after I am married than I do now. No, no, mother; the affection I cherish for you is one that is pre-eminent to all others; nothing can alter it, nothing can destroy it."

"Well, my son, you have my consent, and I will try to feel different about this. Marriage can be made the means of happiness, or the greatest sorrow. May God bless you through life, and keep you from such sorrow as I have had."

"Mother, I am satisfied that you will soon become reconciled. As I fear I am infringing upon my time too much I shall return to the store. I



will ask to see Lallie to-morrow evening, then she will, I hope, answer me fully. I have not mentioned this matter to any one, and do not wish you to do so. We are invited to a party at Mr. Stanley's to-morrow evening. I hope you will go?"

"No, my boy; I would feel sad among the gay and happy. Remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, and tender my regrets."

Clifton kissed his mother good-bye and hurried home.



## CHAPTER IX.

The feelings that engross the heart when in contemplation of anticipated joys, are beyond the power of words to depict.

The day for the party dawned bright and beautiful, and lingered as though it was loth to leave, and yield its moments to the buried past. The evening twilight found Clifton on his way to Mrs. Burton's, for he was to accompany Lallie to the party. When he reached the house he found Lallie sitting on the front porch. She greeted him with a bright smile.

"Lallie," he said, "I am indeed glad to see you."

"Thank you, Mr. Steadman. Be seated here. It is quite pleasant, and I think we will have a most delightful evening for the entertainment."

"Lallie, I have called early—it is now only 7 o'clock, and I ordered the carriage to be here at



8:30—so we have one and a-half hours to be together, and I shall have to ask you to pardon my persistency and abruptness, but will you tell me now what conclusion you have reached in reference to the subject of our marriage. It would be impossible for you to imagine the suspense I have suffered, what feelings of mingled hope and fear have been mine since I last saw you. I called at the house this afternoon and had quite a long talk with mother. Was sorry I did not get to see you.”

“Yes, mother and Mrs. Steadman told me that you had been here. I had gone over to visit a sick neighbor, and regretted that I failed to see you.”

“Lallie, will you not tell me now?”

“Pardon me, Mr. Steadman, I did not intend to evade you,” interrupted Lallie. “I have sought the advice of my parents, and have given it a most careful consideration, and my parents told me that they would leave the matter entirely with me, after stating that they thought I was too young to take such a step.”



“Then, since you are left to decide for yourself tell me, and tell me this moment, wont you, how you shall decide it?”

Lallie looked intently at him for a moment, and then asked him for a pencil, which he handed her. Before she began to write he remarked: “You are to write the doom of a life that shall be aimless and without a purpose if your answer be in the negative; and if it is as I hope for it to be you are to bless my life and seal it with the hope of an elysian felicity. May God instruct you, and may the words be in unison with my every hope.”

Lallie handed him the card which contained the following:

“My heart is thine.”

Clifton read it at a glance, and exclaimed:

“O, my soul's joy!

If after every tempest come such calms,  
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death,  
And let the laboring bark climb hills of seas  
Olympus high, and back again as low  
As hell's from Heaven! If I were now to die,  
'Twill now to be most happy; for, I fear  
My soul hath her consent so absolute  
That not another comfort like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate!’



Lallie, I feel as I have never felt before ; those precious words shall stand as a fortification to all sorrow, and though misfortune may come, yet I shall feel happy, for thy heart is mine, and even 'in the valley of the shadow of death' I shall forget myself and silently repeat 'thy heart is mine.'

"Ah, can this be possible, or is it a dream that when I awake I shall be mocked and scorned? If this be a dream 'what have I dared and how shall I descend and perish not?' No, no ; it is no dream, it is a vivid reality. It is love repaid with love. It is love pure, devout, without limit, and which was born never to die ; but shall be known to angels when the heart that cherishes it is mouldering into dust."

"Mr. Steadman, I am glad to discover that I have been the instrument of so much pleasure and have given you such joy. When I last saw you I had decided the matter for myself, but I felt that I should show respect to my parents by referring the question to them. My conscience pained me



for deferring you, but I felt it a duty to do so."

"Lallie, this is a decision that you shall never regret, I hope. It shall be the chief purpose of my life to provide you every comfort and pleasure."

"I feel assured of this, and I shall try to perform my part, and try in every way to add to your pleasure. Marriage I regard as a sacred and solemn thing. When it is well advised it brightens the dark side of life. There are two shoulders to bear life's burdens, and two hearts between which are divided every sorrow."

"Yes, Lallie, happy marriages are all this and even more. Man never becomes thoroughly developed until he receives the purifying influence of a wife's affection. Woman's moral character is sublime; and if the reins of government were in her hands she would subdue the world with the law of love. As it is she holds the civil and social compact together. She is the queen of the world. Withhold her influence from man and he retrogrades to barbarism. We see this magical influence of precious woman illustrated in the history



of nations. Where she is made an underling and a beast of burden we find that there is no progress, and no civilization, society a chaos, and that barbarism sets its insignia upon that nation ; but take those nations that appreciate female prestige and they are nations worthy of record upon the annals of history."

"There," interrupted Lallie, "is the carriage."

"Yes. You had better take a wrap, Lallie ; it may be cool returning to-night."

"Why, Clifton, is that you !" exclaimed Mrs. Steadman. "Why did you not come in? How long have you been here?"

"About an hour and a-half, I suppose."

By this time Mrs. Burton came out and warmly greeted him, and expressed the hope that they would enjoy the evening.

"Thank you," returned Clifton, "we anticipate a most delightful evening."

"It was a beautiful night, and there was a large crowd in attendance at Mr. Stanley's. His residence was a large and beautiful building, out



some distance from the business portion of the city. It was situated on an elevated site, with a terraced lawn in front.

Lallie and Clifton deprived themselves of the pleasure of each other's society for the first few hours of the evening, after which they took a promenade upon the lawn where every detail of their marriage was arranged. There was no one who supposed that Clifton and Lallie were in love except Mr. and Mrs. Stanley.

Lallie had set the 15th of October as the day for their marriage, which was only two months from then. The hours glided swiftly by, and brought this happy occasion to a close. All left feeling they had spent an evening that would long be remembered.

The following day Clifton asked Mr. Lapell about the arrangement of the business he had offered to start him in. Mr. Lapell said: "Clifton, I have become very much interested in you, and as I was the recipient of many favors from your father, I have decided to consign to you a



small stock of goods and give you time to make the money out of them before you pay for them. The business will be conducted in your name altogether. I have secured the house, and you had better begin at once to arrange the stock with what goods I can supply from my store, then you can order the remainder of your stock and it will be here in a short time."

"Mr. Lapell, this is indeed an agreeable surprise, and I feel utterly at a loss to express my gratitude. I suppose you will have no objection to having a legal agreement to this. It is best to do business in a business way."

"Why certainly not, my boy. You can have the agreement drawn up by an attorney covering my proposition, and bring it to me and I will sign it. Clifton, I suppose you have been informed of my borrowing a large sum of money from your father, and that I failed soon after, which forced him to sell his farm. In addition to the amount he loaned me, he went security for me for a large sum of money which he was also compelled to



pay. I have recovered about all my losses, and feel that since he has not been heard from, that it is my duty to do something for you. Of course you understand that I am not giving you the stock, but furnish it and consign it to you, giving you your own time to make the money out of it. You will have one of the best locations in the city. It is the Philips building on the corner of Clide and Chestnut streets."

"O, yes," remarked Clifton, "I know the place. Mr. Stanley is agent."

"Yes, go and see him at once and arrange the terms."

"Mr. Lapell, I hardly know how I should properly express my gratitude to you. I will go now to Mr. Stanley's office."

Clifton hurried to Mr. Stanley's office and found him all alone. When he entered Mr. Stanley rose and greeted him warmly, remarking:

"How do you feel after being up so late last night."

"Thank you, I feel quite well. Mr. Stanley,



I have some very important business with you this morning."

Clifton explained the offer made him by Mr. Lapell, and Mr. Stanley wrote up the contract in business and legal form. Mr. Stanley was delighted with Clifton's good fortune, and told him that with his popularity and experience he would meet with unbounded success.

"Where will you get a house, Clifton?"

"Why, Mr. Lapell informed me that the Phillips building—"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Stanley, "I have the agency for that; you can get it and can take possession to-morrow if you wish but it is rather large and extensive. Mr. Lapell must expect to furnish you a very large stock."

"Yes, he said that he would give me a full mixed stock."

Clifton left Mr. Stanley's office almost without ceremony, he was so elated over his prospects. He presented the contract to Mr. Lapell, who read it carefully and then said; "I will sign that."



He did so and had it attested by three witnesses. He and Clifton began at once to select the goods. After the lapse of a few days Clifton had his store splendidly arranged. The contract, though drawn up hurriedly, was a perfect one. Mr. Stanley never erred in such things, and as he knew just what depended on this, he endeavored to make it faultless.

The prospects of his business were so flattering, and the anticipation of his marriage made Clifton feel that he had been truly blessed. He employed his friend, Claude Bolton, as head clerk. Mr. Bolton was a young man of considerable prominence in social circles, and had also great popularity throughout the territory from which the city of Gunville drew its support. He was also experienced in mercantile business.

Time passed on, and Clifton's success was even greater than he had thought it possible to be. The friends Clifton had made while with Mr. Lapell had all patronized him, and to such an extent that it had been seriously felt by Mr. Lapell, and



Mr. Bolton was now controlling his friends in the interest of Clifton.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,”

And with Clifton this tide had truly been “taken at the flood.”

The morose eccentric character of Clifton had been so materially changed by his success that those who knew him while a boy would scarcely recognize him now, and there was also as great a change in his appearance. He was now upon the threshold of manhood, and was thoroughly developed and extremely handsome and affable. He was scrupulously honest in all his dealings, and whenever he sold a stranger any thing he always impressed him so forcibly with his integrity that he would secure his support and patronage in future.

The clouds of misfortune that had lowered upon the life of our young hero had vanished, and the sunshine of success and happiness beamed full upon him.



## CHAPTER X.

“The orb of day  
Sinks sweetly smiling; not the faintest breath  
Steals o’er the autumn fields, the clouds of eve  
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;  
And vesper’s image on the western hills  
Is beautifully smiling.”

SUCH was the scene that closed the day appointed for the marriage of Clifton and Lallie.

The grand old church that Lallie had attended from her infancy was elaborately decorated and brilliantly illuminated for the occasion. And at an early hour the crowd began to assemble and continued until the house was packed.

Promptly at the appointed hour the bridal party arrived. The bride wore a trailing white silk, and was as lovely as she alone could be. The groom was faultlessly attired in conventional black, and bore himself right royally. The bridesmaids were all in white. It was a brilliant scene, and very impressive. The marriage was followed by a



reception, to which all of the most particular friends of both families were invited. The reception, which was given by the parents of the bride, was all that could be desired, and some of the formality usually displayed on wedding occasions being dispensed with, all enjoyed the evening to the fullest extent.

The many bitter and dark scenes through which Clifton had passed had been the means of richly enhancing his appreciation of his present position. The misfortunes of life have a power for good that is seldom appreciated.

Clifton had at last a home of his own to which he could take his mother. His heart swelled with pride when he had placed the two beings he loved best upon earth together, and he felt that he had in truth a home once more.

The success that attended Mr. Steadman was almost incredible. Everything that he invested yielded a rich return, and after six months' time he was doing a very large business. He had in this brief period clearly evinced the qualifications



of a shrewd and safe financier. There had been incorporated a company in which Mr. Stanley had large stock. It was a cotton and woolen mill. Clifton Steadman was made president and business manager. He was to receive a salary of five thousand dollars a year. He had never until now had an opportunity of giving himself full sway in business matters. Notwithstanding the fact that he had been a great help and adviser to Mr. Lapell that gentleman would never risk his judgment in matters of heavy speculations, and yet his judgment always proved successful in such matters as they were given upon. His great success had become the talk of the entire city and surrounding country. Fortune smiled upon him as the favorite son. All this was but a reasonable reward for such a devoted son, for such a true and noble christian gentleman. If we were to follow him up and make mention of each and every success that attended him through the first years of his business it would appear absurd and incredulous. Suffice it to say, that after eighteen months he had



paid Mr. Lapell for the goods, and had a large stock which he had purchased on his own account.

Claude Bolton had been offered, and accepted, a position as commercial traveler by a large house in New York, to represent them in two of the Western states. Mr. Steadman was successful, however, in supplying the vacancy caused by this with his brother-in-law, Ernest Burton, who was a warm friend of Clifton's, and a good bookkeeper and business man.

Claude Bolton gave glowing accounts of the western country through which he was traveling, and earnestly besought Clifton to come out on a prospecting tour, which was at first only slightly considered. He felt that it would be impossible to improve his condition, and that he could not think of making any venture so far from home, and he would not for a moment entertain the idea of ever locating in the West or making it his permanent home.

While he had been so greatly blessed and prospered in his business he had been kind and tender



to his beautiful and noble young wife. He had been all that a true, affectionate and noble husband could be and they were as happy as it is ever possible for mortals to be in this life.

How could they have been otherwise? She was all that woman could be—refined, accomplished and beautiful, kind and affectionate. And he was a paragon in all that term implies. Surely life contains no greater bliss than being blessed with such love as they cherished for each other. If there be a richer blessing than this it is the crown of immortal glory that is given the hero who conquers the evil passions of his nature, and lives a life of consecration to the Great Master above.

There is no victory to crown the life that attains wealth or even fame that comes alone by circumstance. The palm is only his that surmounts obstacles and rises amid impediments. It is easy to walk through the darkness if there be a light to guide us, but those who hew their way and carve their own destiny are brave and victorious heroes.



They are "the light of the world"; yea, they are "the salt of the earth" and they are "a light set upon a hill."

"Life out of death is heaven's unwritten law;  
Nay, it is written in myriad forms;  
A victor's palm grows on the fields of war,  
And strength and beauty are the fruit of storms."

Claude Bolton had continued to write Clifton and had been so persistent in his entreaties that Clifton had decided that he would go West for a prospecting purpose.

When he informed Lallie and his mother that he had decided to go they sought to persuade him to abandon the idea, but he assured them that he would be gone only ten or fifteen days and that he knew there were golden opportunities that offered themselves to men of means or Claude would not be writing him. So the day was appointed for his departure, and he wrote to Claude that he had decided to come, and that he wished him to meet him on his arrival.

The place he had decided to visit first was a flourishing little town on the frontier of Texas.



He was to leave his business in charge of Earnest Burton, his brother-in-law, and had requested him to stay at his house during his absence. Lallie wept bitterly as she parted with Clifton. He had never been absent from her during the two years they had been married, and she could not endure for him to take such a long trip, and at the last moment earnestly entreated him to give up the trip, to which he replied:

“Lallie, I am astonished at your weakness. I am not a child, my dear, and though I have traveled very little I shall be fully capable of taking care of myself. You add greatly to the pain it gives me to leave you by such demonstrations as this. Now do cheer up and be brave. I will write you every day or two. Now, dear, give yourself no uneasiness about me, and take good care of yourself.”

“Clifton, I dread to see you leave, because that is such a wild country, and the people are so desperate.”

“I do not think they are any worse than other



people. The country has been settled by emigrants from the older States, and though there may be some rough characters the good are largely in majority."

"Well, you are so good and kind that I know even strangers will love you. I pray that God will protect you during your absence and speed the day for your return. I hope you will meet Mr. Bolton on your arrival, but do not let him persuade you to move to that country, for I could not endure to live there."

After assuring Lallie that he would not be persuaded to move out West, he turned to his mother and pressed her fondly to his breast, and then turned to his lovely wife again and took a farewell kiss. Lallie and Mrs. Steadman stood at the gate and watched him until he was out of sight, when Lallie sobbingly repeated:

"Speed on wherever God's angels may guide thee;  
No fancy can dream, and no language can tell  
What faith and what blessings walk ever beside thee  
Or the depth of our love as we bid thee farewell."

"Why should I feel so grieved to bid him fare-



well, mother, when he tells me that his stay shall not be long?"

"It is a weakness to which our sex are predisposed I guess, my child."

"Mother, I feel a strange presentiment. I suppose it is because I am so unfavorably impressed with the people out there. I should not feel as I do if it was any place else that I was going to. I have read so many 'Wild Western Scenes,' and so much about the desperadoes there that I cannot do even the good people justice in my thoughts of them."

"Lallie, this is just as you say. The accounts that you have read of the 'Wild West' have biased your opinions, and I would insist that you give yourself no uneasiness about Clifton. You feel this separation so seriously because you have never been absent from him since your marriage, and you must teach yourself to become reconciled to this. I am really glad the poor fellow has gone, though I hate to be deprived of his pleasant society. It will be a recreation for him, and he has



been so closely confined to his business, and as he is attending to business at the same time, I feel that, for his sake, I ought not have demonstrated the reluctance that I did at his going."

These words were consoling to Lallie, and she resolved that she would be brave and try to be as cheerful as the circumstances would permit.

Lallie made her library a place of resort. She sought to beguile her feelings by reading. That night, after she had eaten supper, she repaired to the library, and after looking over an old scrap book that had been made of prose and poetical selections by Clifton, she noticed the following lines which had been marked by some one, and which served greatly to excite her childish presentiments:

"How can'st thou tell how far from thee  
Fate or caprice may lead his steps ere that to-morrow  
comes.  
Men have been known to lightly turn the corner of a  
street,  
And days have grown to months,  
And months to lagging years ere they have looked in  
loving eyes again."



## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Clifton Steadman alighted from the train at the little town of Edgewood he was delighted to see one familiar face. The genial and warm-hearted Claude Bolton was there to meet him.

What a change of scene! The broad prairie stretched out before his view. Thousands of cattle were grazing thereon, in the distance. He had read many Indian legends and many descriptions of Western scenery, but none had impressed him as did the reality. He thought of the poor unfortunate Indians, who had been driven from their wilderness home. There was where their rude wigwams once stood and where the calumet in brotherly love was passed from one to another, proclaiming peace and freedom. There was the happy hunting ground, which once was theirs, and where they were monarchs of all they surveyed. There was something majestic about these plains.



They were sublime in their immensity, and filled the heart with love for adventure.

The little town of Edgewood, so called because it was situated on the edge of the prairie, was destined to be a flourishing city, and the people were wild with the prospect of its development. Clifton saw that the opportunities for making a great fortune were now open to him, and he could scarcely wait till he had rested from his trip to drive over the country and invest in land and cattle.

Claude Bolton took him to the Commercial Hotel, where he made his headquarters when in town. And Clifton, after making his toilet, took supper and was now prepared for a long talk with his friend. Notwithstanding his great fatigue and loss of sleep he and his friend talked until a late hour. Claude had instructed him in detail about the many opportunities that were within his grasp and requested him to secure a team from the stable of Mr. Clayton, who owned large tracts of land, and drive out and look at the country. He said he thought that Mr. Clayton would go with



him, as he was very courteous to strangers, and especially those who were prospecting. Claude was to go to the stable with Clifton the next morning and introduce him to Mr. Clayton, but could not go driving with him that day as he had some very important business engagements to meet. He asked Clifton to defer his drive until the next day when he could go with him, but Clifton was so elated and his curiosity so great that he told Mr. Bolton he would go with Mr. Clayton the first day and with him the next. Clifton wished to see as much of the country as he could in the few days he was to remain there.

The next morning Claude introduced Clifton to Mr. Clayton as a prominent capitalist from the East, and after lingering for a few minutes he excused himself, saying his business was very pressing.

As Mr. Clayton could not go with Clifton he determined to go alone, and after looking at the many fine horses in the stable selected a beautiful span, but Mr. Clayton told him that he never used



those except on very special occasions, and that he would prefer letting him have any others he had in the stable as he prized those very highly, having paid the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars for them. But Clifton insisted, and assured Mr. Clayton that he was an experienced driver, and would be responsible for any damage done them. As Mr. Clayton anticipated selling him a large tract of land and probably many lots in the city he finally consented.

“Mr. Steadman, you will please pardon my leaving. I would be indeed delighted to go with you, but I have some business that demands my most immediate attention.”

“Certainly, Mr. Clayton, I, too, regret that you cannot go out with me to-day, but I will have the pleasure of your company to-morrow, I hope.”

“I hope so. You will find the horses full of life, but not wild by any means. Now be careful with them, I prize them very highly.”

“I hope you will give yourself no uneasiness about the team. I can manage them and will



return them in good condition or make good any damage done them."

Taking out his watch Mr. Clayton found he had encroached upon his time, and, turning to old Prock, one of his hostlers, said: "Prock, you will get out Snowflake and Chester and harness them for Mr. Steadman." And, wishing Clifton a safe and pleasant drive, hurried away.

Old Prock, as he was familiarly called, was an old man who would work around the stable for a few weeks at a time, and, as soon as he got a little money, would quit his work and remained drunk as long as it lasted. But, as he was so faithful while at his work, Mr. Clayton would not discharge him. He had discovered that old Prock was a man of education and had once seen better days. After taking great pains to see that everything was secure about the harness Prock turned and said: "Sir, your team is now ready." Mr. Steadman handed him a coin, and, as he took it, the big tears gathered in his eyes. "Old man,"



said Clifton, "my kindness seems to move you greatly. You must be used to harsh treatment."

"It is true, my dear sir."

After getting out of the stable Mr. Steadman noticed that the horse on the right was limping, but as it was so slight he was not much alarmed about it. In fact, he had observed the lameness when the old man brought them out to harness. The road was as level and smooth as a pavement and Mr. Steadman drove for many miles through the country and took dinner with a ranchman whom he had met. The ranchman was very hospitable and showed the young capitalist marked respect and attention.

After Clifton had driven over the large ranch he decided to return to Edgewood, and, as he had fifteen miles distance, he drove hurriedly. As he approached the stable Mr. Clayton was standing outside of the door, and, when he drove in, said: "Young fellow, what is the matter with that horse? I see that he is limping badly."

"Nothing more than what was the matter this



morning when I took him out. I noticed his being slightly lame when I drove out of the stable."

"Not so, sir; and you know it. You shall pay for the injury done him, or I will prosecute you to the fullest extent of the law."

"Mr. Clayton, you are mistaken, sir. The old gentleman who harnessed the team for me this morning will, I feel assured, tell you that your horse was lame when I took him from your stable."

"Then, sir, it was your duty not to accept him if you found him lame." Turning to old Prock Mr. Clayton said: "Old man, what was the condition of Chester this morning when you took him from the stall? Did you notice him being lame?"

"Not at all, sir; he was all right as far as I could see."

"Turning to Mr. Steadman he said: "Now you see that you have told me a wilful falsehood, and I demand of you a forfeit to the full value of that animal. If he recovers I will return your money; if not I shall keep it."



“I do not propose to suffer you to contradict my word and tell me that I have told you a falsehood. You are unreasonable, sir, and I demand redress.”

“I have none to offer, and if you do not put up a forfeit of three hundred and fifty dollars, and do it now I will make you wish that you had.”

“Mr. Clayton, I do not wish to have a difficulty with you. I will give you the money; but mark you, sir, I will see what protection the law offers, and I will have this money back or I will take the worth of it in revenge.”

By this time a large crowd had gathered, for they had expected a serious difficulty would ensue.

Clifton, very much exasperated, turned to walk away, remarking to Mr. Clayton, “I shall see you again, sir.”

“You had better see me now if you mean to fight,” replied Mr. Clayton.

“I am unarmed, sir, and you know it; but I shall see you again, you may rest assured.”

Clifton then went on to the hotel. He had



been there but a little while when his friend Claude came in, and he told him of the quarrel that had taken place, and that Mr. Clayton had demanded a forfeit of three hundred and fifty dollars, and that he put it up.

“Well, Clifton, Mr. Clayton is perfectly foolish about those horses, and, as he told you, he only kept them for special occasions. yet I think he will do what is right. He was mad at the time or he would not have spoken so offensively to you.”

“I expect he is under the impression that I will attack him when I meet him, as we parted with very bitter words.”

“Clifton, I am indeed sorry that this has happened. I would hardly have thought that Mr. Clayton would have demanded a forfeit from you as he knows me so well, and you to be my friend. It grieves me to know that he would not show me more respect.”

Mr. Steadman and Mr. Bolton talked for some time about it. They decided that they would go



down to Mr. Clayton's office after supper and talk the matter over with him.

Clifton was very much insulted at the language Mr. Clayton used to him, and the more he thought of it the more he felt enraged.

Clifton went to the writing desk and wrote a letter to his wife. After he had completed it he told Claude he would step over to the post-office, which was across the street, and post it, so that it would be sure to get off on the next train. It was then quite dark, and, as he entered the post-office, he stumbled over something which he thought to be a drunken man, but upon examination he found it to be a man some one had murdered, and seeing a dirk sticking in his breast pulled it out, and the blood gushed out upon him, covering his hands. He rushed back to the hotel, and, in an excited manner, called Claude out and told him of the dead body. They went back and found that it was Mr. Clayton, the liveryman. Then Claude discovered the blood stains on Clifton's hands, and asked why it was,



and Clifton told him that he pulled a dagger out of the man's breast. Mr. Bolton saw that his friend had committed an error that would, no doubt, lead to his arrest and probably to conviction. He begged Clifton to leave the city at once.

"Oh, my God! What shall I do?" exclaimed Clifton. "Am I to be accused of this?"

"Yes, sir; and you will be convicted for it. Your language to Mr. Clayton not more than an hour ago, and which was heard by many witnesses, and those hands covered with his blood, will make a chain of circumstantial evidence that will convict you. *Go*, I tell you, Clifton Steadman, or you will be captured. I have always been your friend. I do not want to testify against you."

"What? *Flee!* and be a fugitive from justice? No, no! It is only the wicked that 'fleeth when no man pursueth'. God is my witness, and He is too merciful and just, and too good to permit me to suffer for a murder that I never even thought to commit. Mr. Bolton, you seem to be of the opinion that I am guilty of this awful deed."



“I am, Clifton, and you will pardon me for thinking so, since you see yourself I could not believe otherwise. But, regardless of my belief, I cherish the memory of our long association and uninterrupted friendship; and my sympathy for your young and affectionate wife, and your very devoted mother constrains me to entreat you to flee for your life.”

Clifton exclaimed: “Oh, God, what have I done!” This was a moment of excitement and perplexity that caused Clifton Steadman to halt between two opinions. “Shall I,” he thought, “stay and be convicted of murder and drag out a miserable life in a loathsome prison cell or shall I flee and be a fugitive from justice and always be afraid to show my face to those I love most dearly?” He thought of his loving and beautiful young wife, her image flashed vividly before him, her face so pure, so lovely, and the trouble this would bring upon her, to blight her happy life. It seemed that he could hear her voice, so sweet, so gentle, so full of music.



There was a mountain of evidence that would proclaim his guilt, and there was a consciousness that proclaimed his innocence that made it hard for him to determine what was best to be done; but as in every instance of his life where he was halting between two opinions, he decided for the right. Though death should be his portion he would not sacrifice his sense of justice or make the least compromise of his integrity.

He and his friend went back to the hotel and related the awful occurrence to the proprietor and the crowd of visitors, and in a few minutes the little town of Edgewood was wild with excitement. The wife and children of Mr. Clayton came and wept over his lifeless form and seemed delirious with sorrow.

When the friends of Mr. Clayton who heard the wrangle at the stable not more than an hour and one-half previous had gathered around and saw this same young man Steadman, and remembered the threats he had made to Mr. Clayton, questioned him and saw that his hands were stained



with blood, they seized him without a warrant, and would have lynched him but was protected by the officers who took him to the jail and kept it guarded.

Clifton offered no resistance to the officers, but begged a hearing that night, which was refused him. He was now a prisoner, and the officers placed him in a strong iron cage, the turnkey closed the heavy gate and locked him in. He began to weep as a child; he thought of his little home, once so happy; now made so desolate, so troubled, so gloomy, and here he was behind the prison bars; he so noble and generous, so spiritual and so pure of heart, so earnest in everything he ever undertook, made to suffer for another's crime. He wept and prayed nearly all night, he could not sleep. He had tried to write a letter to his mother upon a leaf from his memorandum book, but was crazed with grief and could not write. Long after midnight he became so exhausted he was forced to lie down, so he spread the coarse blankets that had been given him upon



the floor, using his own clothes for a pillow. After lying there for quite awhile he fell asleep; he slept a few hours, and when he awoke the dawn of day was breaking, he could hear the merry voices of his fellow prisoners, some singing and some laughing as though they never felt a care.

Soon the turnkey came up with a breakfast that Claude had sent him from the hotel, he ate very little.

About nine o'clock the officers came for him, bound him with shackles, and took him to the magistrate's office where he was to receive a preliminary trial. All the witnesses had been summoned that was thought necessary. After a trial which lasted until late in the evening he was remanded to the jail without bail, having been found guilty of murder in the first degree.

There was no chance for bail, but he must await the action of the criminal court, which was to convene the next month.

After this preliminary trial, when Clifton had been returned to the same cell from which he had



been taken, he sent for Mr. Bolton and prevailed upon him to go and take charge of his business, and he gave him full control, and requested him to tell Lallie and his mother of his trouble, but to broach the matter to them as gently as possible. Claude went at once upon his sad mission.

Clifton had requested that the old man who had harnessed his team be at his trial. But old Prock was on a drinking spree, but had he been sober his evidence would not have effected a change in the decision that was rendered. But Clifton had hoped that old Prock would remember that one of the horses was lame when he started out, though he had told Mr. Clayton that they were both all right ; but had this been fully established it could not have palliated the evidence against him.

Old Prock only denied that the horse was lame because he feared that if he admitted it Mr. Clayton would discharge him. Yet Clifton could not help believing that this old man's evidence would be valuable to him in his final trial. Insignificant



as the old man might be Clifton was solicitous about him, and hoped that he would not be discharged from his position. But Old Prock was discharged by a relative of Mr. Clayton's who took charge of the stable. The old man was drinking excessively, and seemed to have plenty of money to spend, which astonished all the men with whom he had worked at the stable, as they knew he had drawn only ten dollars when he was discharged.

In two weeks old Prock was a raving maniac. He had at first drifted into delirium tremens and from that to a form of lunacy that appeared hopeless. He was so desperate that he was sent to the asylum. He had no friends to weep for him, nobody loved him. This ended the hope that Clifton cherished for having the old man as a witness.

Clifton had written a long letter to his wife, asking them and also Mr. Stanley to come to him. He had given Mr. Stanley a complete history of his troubles, and as Claude had reached Gunville a few days before the letter was received, Mrs.



Steadman and Lallie started at once for Edgewood, without telling anyone except Mrs. Burton where they were going.

This was a long and sad trip. The meeting of Lallie, Mrs. Steadman and Clifton at the jail was bitterly affecting. He was not permitted to see them outside of the strong iron cage, and Lallie and his mother kissed him through the heavy bars. This scene was so touching that the cold heart of the jailor became so greatly affected that he turned away to hide his tears.

After an hour of such weeping Lallie and Mrs. Steadman were told that they would have to leave, but could repeat their visit at certain hours of the day. They had brought with them some favorite books from Clifton's library that they knew he would be interested in reading; but before they were allowed him they were carefully inspected by the jailor to prevent the passage of any instrument by which Mr. Steadman could effect his escape.

How very insulting and mortifying this was to



Lallie and his mother, as they never for a moment thought or wished to liberate Clifton save by fair and honest means.

Mrs. Steadman, who had quaffed the gall of sorrow's bitter cup without a murmur seemed to be incapable to endure this trouble. Her withered hopes had been warmed into life by Clifton's success, which had beguiled her into moments of joy, only to give a darker coloring to the misery of her present woes. She refused food for days, and was deaf and insensible to condolence.

What a life of bereavement hers was—once as radiant as the spire of some resplendent dome, but now plunged into murkiest gloom.

“On her day of life the night was falling,”

And a night in which no sorrow-laden dream would disturb the sweetness of her long repose. She was growing old, and these heavy strokes of fate, though bravely borne, were precipitating the hour of her dissolution. What a blessed thing it might have been had death spared her this bitter anguish, but God knows best and her life mission



had not yet been finished. There were broken hearts that she must live to pour the balm of love upon, and in healing painful wounds she would forget the sorrow of her own sad heart.

“With rest almost in sight the spirit faints,  
And heart and flesh grow weary at the last;  
Our feet would walk the city of the saints  
Even before the silent gate is passed.”



## CHAPTER XII.

MR. STANLEY went to Edgewood and had gathered all the information and evidence that could be obtained in relation to Clifton's trouble. He employed local counsel, and gave this case more attention and study than any one he had ever undertaken. His noble and generous heart went out in the warmest sympathy for his young friend, and had Clifton been his own son he could not have labored more untiringly nor exhibited more solicitude. After he had surveyed the situation he was without hope of Clifton's acquittal, but his interest and labors in the case made the impression that he was very hopeful. He had brought depositions from the most prominent men of the state in which Clifton was raised to establish his character, while it would have no other bearing upon the case it would serve to mitigate the penalty should he be found guilty.



Mr. Stanley did not for a moment question his innocence, but he saw it was a case of circumstantial evidence that seemed to be without rebuttal. He had labored almost night and day for three weeks before the criminal court convened. The grand jury had found an indictment against Clifton Steadman for murder, and the time set for his trial was the last week of that term of the court.

Mr. Stanley still had many preliminaries to arrange. He telegraphed for Claude Bolton, and then went to the Asylum to ascertain if the old hostler Prock was in a condition to give evidence. The superintendent would not permit Mr. Stanley to see the old man, as he was considered one of the most violent lunatics in the asylum, though his case was not necessarily hopeless. Mr. Stanley was met with disappointment.

The sentiment against Mr. Steadman was very bitter. Mr. Clayton was a wealthy and prominent citizen, and had been largely instrumental in the development of Edgewood. Mrs. Clayton and her friends employed counsel to assist the prosecution.



The business of the court had been rapidly dispatched in order to reach the Steadman case upon the day appointed. The people for many miles in the interior had flocked to Edgewood to attend the trial.

Upon the morning of October, the 29th, Clifton was brought into the court room with his hands shackled, accompanied by a deputy sheriff, Mr. Stanley, Lallie and Mrs. Steadman. When he reached the bar the deputy removed the shackles and Clifton took a seat facing the jury, Lallie and his mother near him. There was a complacence about him that seemed to proclaim his innocence. He appeared more like a saint than a criminal. There was not that downcast expression upon his face that marks the face of the recreant. The blush of shame was not seen upon his handsome face, and even at this critical moment his expression was calm and serene, every feature the embodiment of honor, benevolence and piety. When ordered by the judge to rise he stood firm and erect while the charges were read



to him which he had to answer. When asked the question, "guilty or not guilty," he answered with a firm and solemn voice, "I am not guilty."

The trial was now begun. The prosecution had every one, except old Prock, who had heard the conversation between Clifton and Mr. Clayton upon the evening of the drive. Their evidence was so plainly given and so greatly magnified that conviction seemed inevitable.

When Mr. Bolton was called to the stand his evidence was found to be against Clifton, as it could not have been otherwise to have been true. Yet he showed a disposition to save him if he could, and would frequently offer his opinion that Clifton did not commit the murder; but these opinions were objected to. The trial lasted for three days. In his closing speech Mr. Stanley spoke for several hours and made an earnest appeal for his friend's life such as he had never made before. His touching and eloquent words brought tears from the eyes of the entire audience.

The case was then submitted to the jury.



After consuming several hours they returned to the court room, and the foreman handed the clerk of the court their verdict. When the clerk rose to read there was a death-like silence in the room. The verdict was:

“We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder, and assess his punishment at ninety-nine years at hard labor in the State penitentiary.”

It would be vain to attempt a description of the scene which followed. Suffice it to say that the tears and screams of poor Mrs. Steadman and Lallie were enough to have touched the most callous hearts. When Clifton's wife and mother threw their arms about his neck the aged judge turned his head away and wiped the tears from his wrinkled cheeks. The members of the jury hung their heads to hide their tears. They wept to think that they had, by the stern and cold decree of law, been forced to doom a soul around whose life was twined such tender hearts.

Mr. Stanley, although not surprised at the verdict, sank in his chair and wept like a child.



His noble heart went out in sympathy to his young friend, whom he loved as a son. And when he thought of the tender mother and wife doomed to such affliction his heart seemed to melt within him. The sheriff, a stern man, yet deeply moved himself, led the broken hearted wife and mother from the court room, and tried to console them. The wife of Mr. Clayton followed them out and implored forgiveness for the steps she had taken in the prosecution. Her own grief-stricken heart was made to feel that "touch of sympathy which makes the world akin."

After the wife and mother of Clifton had gone and order was restored, young Steadman was ordered by the court to rise and receive his sentence. When asked if he had anything to say, he replied:

"There is nothing that I could say to change the penalty that has been placed upon me. The evidence that has been given against me *appears* to have been unquestionably true. I submit to my fate with the *hope* and *belief* that he who committed



this murder for which *I* am doomed to suffer will yet repent and confess.

‘Truth crushed to earth shall rise again.’

If there be a God he can never permit the just and innocent to suffer for the offenses of the dissolute and recreant.”

“Then you mean to say that you are innocent?” inquired the judge.

“Yes, I *am innocent!*”

“The evidence against you, Mr. Steadman, has been so plain and conclusive that I cannot set aside the verdict; I therefore sentence you to our State Penitentiary for a term of ninety-nine years of hard labor. If you are innocent, sir, you have failed to prove it. If you are guilty it is right that you should suffer. If there ever arises any evidence to rebut that which has effected your conviction I shall be very glad to become instrumental in your reprieve.”

“The tone of Clifton’s voice and his open, honest expression impressed many with the belief that he was innocent. The deputy was ordered



to take the prisoner and place him in jail where he would safely keep him until the prison officials came for him.

Mr. Stanley and Claude Bolton followed the deputy and Clifton to the jail, and, after a lengthy conversation, they left with the promise of calling again the next day. The sheriff had taken Mrs. Steadman and Lallie to the hotel, and many ladies and gentlemen, who were greatly excited by the sheriff being in company with the ladies, had followed to inquire the cause. They were deeply affected by the ladies' manifestations of sorrow, and did everything in their power to console them. Nor did they forget the poor heart-broken prisoner. The good people of the place went to visit him very often, and they would take him nice things to eat, or a book that would interest him or pretty flowers.

Mr. Stanley did not even take an appeal to the higher courts for he saw that Clifton's case was a hopeless one. Yet he believed after a few years that he could obtain a pardon for him.



All that years of diligence and economy and moral worth had accumulated for Clifton was swept away at one blow of cruel fate and instead he could see nothing but ruin, disgrace and despair.

It required the tenderest care to enable his mother and wife to survive the terrible shock.

With all Clifton's apparent guilt those who knew him intimately could not be persuaded to believe that he was guilty of murder, for if mankind could possibly be without error, stain or reproach it was Clifton Steadman. His constant association with his noble mother had moulded his character and shaped it with a degree of morality and magnanimity seldom found to be so beautifully blended. He had been reared almost exclusively under female influence, and his short business career was without reproach. He had not only been just and honorable in his dealings with men, but he had been charitable and kind. But with all his innocence and nobleness of character he must eke out a miserable existence in the gloom of a



prison, cut off forever from friends and loved ones.

After the lapse of a few days the prison officers arrived at Edgewood to take Clifton and three others, who had been convicted for short terms, to the State prison. When the officers arrived the sheriff sent for Mr. Stanley, Mr. Bolton, Mrs. Steadman and Lallie. When they arrived at the jail the officers were waiting for them, and they all proceeded to the cage in which Clifton was confined. The turnkey unlocked the outside door and called to him, and told him that the officers had come for him, and then proceeding to the inner door he unlocked it, allowing the officers to enter. They placed a chain around Clifton's neck and locked the other end to their own wrists, and thus brought him out in the presence of his precious wife, mother and friend. The rattling of these heavy chains smote painfully upon the ears of those two most dear to him.

"Lallie, my dear wife," said Clifton, "I am disgraced forever, and we may never see each other again, but tell me, will you ever forget me?"



“Forget thee? *Never!*” exclaimed Lallie. “I may forget myself and all else dear to me, but I will cherish your memory forever.”

“Lallie, may God bless and sustain you and my dear mother in your bereavement, and if we are never permitted to meet again on earth we will I trust meet where afflictions and partings never come. These heavy chains cannot fetter my soul. The hand of death will unbind them, and let my soul go on its homeward journey. Thank God there shall be a day of reckoning and of judgment. Thank God a crown of unfading glory shall be worn by him who wore a crown of thorns.”

“Yes,” sobbed Mrs. Steadman, “many there are to-day whose names were never heard in song or graced the annals of history, who lived a life of torture and disgrace, died in ignominious shame, whose secret deeds of virtue if known would enshrine them forever in the hearts of their countrymen.”

“Yes, Mrs. Steadman,” replied Mr. Stanley,



“and there are those who move in the first circles of society, have praises lavished upon them, and have won the love and confidence of trusting hearts, yet locked up in their lives is treachery, debauchery and disgrace.”

Turning to Clifton Mr. Stanley continued, “My dear boy, I do not want you to feel in your isolation that you are without friends. I have every reason to believe that I can effect your reprieve; your enemies have shown a disposition to be lenient. Now go, my brave boy, and submit to your fate. You will soon win the confidence of the prison officials, and their recommendation for your reprieve would be of great assistance to you in obtaining it. If I live sir, and do not deceive myself, I shall have you free within five years at most.”

“God bless you, Mr. Stanley, you have been a father to me. While laboring for me do not forget my poor mother.”

“Clifton, I would not have you to suffer any uneasiness about your mother; I shall see that she is provided for.”



Mr. Stanley's words were comforting to Clifton and brought consolation to Lallie and Mrs. Steadman that made them feel it possible to take their farewell of Clifton. By this time a large crowd had assembled at the jail. Many had brought nice presents to Clifton, and their kindness to him elicited deep gratitude from his wife and mother. When told that they would be forced to leave Clifton drew his wife to his bosom with his right arm and his mother with his left, weeping and sorrowing bitterly for a moment. He then kissed them for the last time and was led away.







## CHAPTER XIII.

WITH sad hearts and broken spirits Mrs. Steadman and Lallie returned to Gunville, accompanied by Mr. Stanley.

Clifton had made an assignment of all his property and money to his wife and mother and had arranged the transfer of deeds with Mr. Stanley. His business was to be managed by Mr. Bolton who was the most available man to be had, as he was familiar with the people there and a man of great business qualifications.

When the story of Clifton's misfortunes had been related to his friends they were grieved beyond measure and greatly surprised. Those most intimately acquainted with him could not believe the sad intelligence until they had visited Lallie and Mrs. Steadman and saw from their grief-stricken appearance that it was indeed a reality.

Mr. and Mrs. Gladwell had not been apprised



of it as Mrs. Steadman and Lallie had been in such a state of mental anguish, and the calamity had come upon them so suddenly that they had really forgotten their best and closest friends.

None had been more attentive to Mrs. Steadman and Lallie than Mr. Bolton. He was an affable and handsome gentleman, and his attention to Mrs. Steadman had made her regard him next in tenderness to her unfortunate son, and Lallie, knowing that he and her dear husband had been such intimate friends, looked upon him almost as a brother, and they all were impressed with the good judgment Clifton had displayed in making Claude Bolton manager of his business. Under his management the business seemed to thrive equally as well as it had under Clifton's.

Ernest Burton was promoted to the position of head clerk, and financially all ran smoothly.

Lallie and Mrs. Steadman on their arrival at Gunville were met at the depot by Mr. and Mrs. Burton, who took them to their home. Mrs. Steadman was so exhausted from her trip that she



had to be immediately put to bed where she remained several weeks. Her recovery was seriously doubted by her physician.

When Clifton's case had been explained to Mr. and Mrs. Burton they at once took sides against him and Mr. Burton begged his daughter to forget Clifton.

"My child," he said, "would you bring reproach upon our name by clinging to a criminal, a man who has stained his hands with innocent blood, and who has been proven guilty by the courts of justice?"

"Father, would you so cruelly probe the wounds of my broken heart with such words? You know that he did not commit nor could he have committed such a foul murder."

"Then why was he convicted? Why did not Mr. Stanley take an appeal to a higher court? Mr. Stanley himself was no doubt impressed with the fact of it being useless. He is an intimate friend of the family and he would not have sacrificed his allegiance to them and so jeopardized his reputa-



tion as to have failed to take an appeal if he had thought the court which convicted Clifton had made an error."

"Father, Mr. Stanley is not without hope. He says he will have Clifton pardoned."

"Then I suppose you would want to still live with him?"

"Why not, father? God never made a nobler man."

"Well, Lallie, if I thought this moment that you would not forget this man in due course of time I would disown you as my child."

"Then, father, you can disown me now, for I can never forget him, nor can the world make me believe he is guilty, but if he was guilty I would love him still."

"God pity you, my child. Little did I think that one who bears my name and blood should become so enamored with such an indiscreet affection as to sacrifice her character."

"Father, the fact of Clifton's being convicted does not prove that he is guilty. You know



that there are men in every prison in the world who are suffering unjustly, while there are men who make our laws, and are respected as honorable citizens, who, if they were brought to justice would themselves be in chains."

"My child, you talk without reason. I have lived longer in this world than you have, and know something of its ways. Now, if Mr. Stanley had had any hopes of ever acquitting Mr. Steadman why did he permit his case to come to trial so soon?"

"Well, father, he tried to get the trial postponed, but they refused to do it."

"Yes, all this only goes to show that it was a serious case. Now, my daughter, I do not wish you to think I am not in sympathy with you. I can assure you that I feel deeply concerned else I should not have spoken as I have. I shall do all in my power to comfort you in your bereavement. But, for the sake of our name, upon which reproach has never fallen, I most earnestly entreat you to forget this man."



“O, father! How can you expect me to forget him who has been so kind and tender to me and so true to his mother. He has committed no fraud, he has committed no theft, and admitting he was guilty of murder this would reflect no dishonor upon him.”

“I think it would reflect great dishonor. The law attaches the greatest penalty to this offense, and I think Mr. Steadman may congratulate himself that he was not hanged. I am truly sorry for his mother, and I want us to do all in our power to console her. She is indeed a noble woman and is to be pitied.”

Lallie was greatly surprised at her father's advice and felt that it would be impossible for her to act upon it.

“Lallie,” continued Mr. Burton, “I believe if you will look at this as I do you would not offer such a discredit to your own name as to cling to the affection of this man. Did you not know my child that the laws of every State regard you divorced from Mr. Steadman?”



“Not if I wish to live with him. I should not think the law would be so unjust as to deny me the privilege of living with him if I so desired; it may be grounds for obtaining a divorce, but I do not want one. They say that laws are founded upon justice, but if I was denied the privilege of claiming my dear husband when he is released I cannot see how such a law could be just.”

“Yes, my daughter; but if the law regards the conviction of a man for a penal offense sufficient grounds for a divorce then the dignity of the law would be to some extent set aside if the parties entitled to a divorce did not accept or make application for it. The law presumes that no wife would desire to be bound to a husband who had been convicted of a penal offense is the reason this provision has been made. Now, my child; I am shocked to think that you wish to do just contrary to what the laws presume you would do. Laws, as you say, are founded upon justice; that is, their principles are supposed to be, and generally are just. Now suppose Mr. Steadman is never re-



prieved and that in the course of time you wished to marry another, would you assume to believe that it would be right for the law to hold you in allegiance to your first marriage contract ? ”

“ No, father, I would not consider that a very just law ; but my case not one of that kind. I do not wish, nor do I intend to marry another, I only wish to be allowed the privilege of exercising my own choice. Man may enact laws to hold himself in restraint by physical force, but he cannot legislate upon the heart, he cannot legislate upon its affection. Love, like necessity, knows no law.”

“ Lallie, you seem to forget that love sometimes exists without reason. We frequently see where one loves when it is their duty to forget. When one loves that which it can never realize, and that which can never bless them, it is love without reason, and such, my child, I am forced to consider is your affection for Mr. Steadman.”

“ Father, filial obedience is a divine injunction, but I fear you will constrain me to desecrate it if you attempt to persuade me to forget Mr. Steadman.”



“I thought that you ‘were made of sterner stuff’. I have only attempted to show you what a disgrace and reproach you would bring upon our name by clinging to the affection of this man, who is a prisoner for life.”

“Well, father, your language has extorted this promise: That if, after the lapse of five years, I find that no reprieve can be obtained for Mr. Steadman I promise that I will try to forget him in the sense of ever having him as my husband, but to promise that I will forget him entirely, or never love him, is something that I can not, nor would not, for I would be promising something that I know I could not fulfill.”

“This is just like a woman. When once they love a fellow they are as blind as a bat to his faults.”

“Yes, but we are generally sure that they are without fault before we love them. We try first to ascertain if a gentleman is worthy of our esteem before we bestow it. And when we find that we have been the victim of deceit we experience no



regret in relinquishing that esteem, I assure you."

Here Mr. Burton dropped the conversation for he saw that Lallie's feelings were too deep to accomplish his purpose.

Clifton was in the State prison. He had been assigned light work in the laundry department. They never required the prisoners of long term to do heavy work, in order that they might live out all or a greater portion of their sentence. There were rewards offered for good conduct. One was the recommendation for pardon, and another was a large reduction of the original sentence, which was to be calculated upon the principle of compound interest. Upon a long sentence this gave more than one half reduction.

But Clifton knew this compound reduction of time for meritorious conduct would never be the means of enabling him to live out the ninety-nine years sentence he had received, but he resolved to obtain all it could afford in the way of recommending him for a reprieve. His large and beautiful moustache was shaved off, and the coarse and



badly fitting clothes which were put upon him made a very material change in his appearance. He had been assigned a cell to himself which was supplied with a neat bed, but the first night of his incarceration he could not sleep, for his heart was almost bursting within his bosom.

He thought of his old mother, whom he feared he would never meet again. He thought of his affectionate and beautiful Lallie, and his brilliant prospects, all vanished and gone forever. He thought of the shame and disgrace that had fallen upon him; how the cold, cruel world would point the finger of scorn at him should he ever be liberated. He felt that death was many times more preferable than such a fate. This sad old world is filled with regrets and heartaches.

In this melancholy state of feeling he attempted to write to his mother upon a few blank leaves in the books he found in his cell. The letter began with a quotation from Byron, which he was especially fond of reading, and concluded in his own simple rhymes. The letter was as follows:



“ Few are my years, and yet I feel  
This world was not designed for me.  
Ah ! why do darkening shades conceal  
The hour when man must cease to be ? ”

When I was an infant, mother,  
And you pressed my little hand,  
Did you think that it was ever  
Made to wear a shackled band ? ”

Did you think when you had taught me  
To lisp the name of God in prayer,  
Did you think that I would ever  
Bring you to such bitter care ?

But, alas ! I'm doomed to suffer  
The keenest pangs of human shame ;  
I've broken the hearts I loved most fondly,  
And brought disgrace upon our name.

But He who feeds the little sparrows  
Numbers the hairs upon our heads,  
He will hear your cries of sorrow,  
And He will provide you bread.

Ah, then, mother, let us trust Him ;  
He will strengthen and uphold,  
He will lift this burden from you,  
And calm the tempest in your soul.

When I grow sick, and weak and weary,  
Who will bathe my aching head ?  
Who will care when I am dying ?  
Who will weep when I am dead ?

With the prison stripes upon me  
Will they lay me here to sleep,  
With no funeral train to follow,  
And not a friend around to weep ?



His heart became so full that he could not continue. He could hear the groans and sighs of his fellow prisoners all around him, and at each hour the steward would tap the massive bell that hung in the watch tower, to see if the guards on duty were all awake. The guards would respond, "All's well!" one at a time giving the number of their respective stations. The solemn tones of this massive bell seemed as though it was tolling the knell of some departed spirit.

"All's well!" Clifton repeated to himself. No, no! all is *not* well. The agonizing sighs I hear of the weary slaves shut out from the busy world, who may never breathe the sweet air of freedom again, does not indicate that "All's well."

Not until these chains that bind me  
In this narrow prison cell,  
Severed by the hand of justice,  
Can I say that "All is well."

Not until the souls that languish  
In this wretched earthly hell  
Have been freed, if they deserve it,  
Can I say that "All is well."

Not until the little cottage  
Where my wife and mother dwell



Finds me with them in freedom  
Can I say that "All is well."

Such were the feelings of the pure and noble-hearted young man during the first night of his prison experience. But time, the healer of all woes, poured its soothing balm upon his heart, and the hope he entertained of a reprieve made it possible for him to endure his wretched fate.

Mr. Stanley was doing all in his power to obtain Clifton's release. He went to Edgewood and procured the names of the jury and every officer of the court which convicted him upon a petition to the Governor for Clifton's pardon, and in addition to these he secured the names of more than a thousand citizens of the city in which he was convicted, and took it to the Governor and plead most earnestly in Clifton's behalf, but the Governor refused to interfere with the decision of the court and said that he would neither commute nor pardon under any of the evidence contained in the petition.

Mr. Stanley was greatly disappointed, but never intimated it to Clifton or his wife and mother.



A life-time in prison was now Clifton's inevitable fate.

There was but one consoling feature in this unmerciful disaster, and that was that Clifton's business was in the hands of one so warmly devoted to Lallie and Mrs. Steadman—Claude Bolton—who would surely see that they received their just dues from their property.







## CHAPTER XIV.

“ And this is life: To live, to love, to lose !  
To feel a joy stir, like an unsung song,  
The deep, unwrit emotions of our souls ;  
Then, when we fain would utter it, we find  
Our glad lips stricken dumb. To watch a hope  
Climb like a rising star, 'till from the heights  
Of fair existence, it sends lustre down,  
Whose radiance makes earth's very shadows shine,  
Then suddenly to see it disappear,  
Leaving a bleak, appalling emptiness,  
In all the sky it did illuminate.”

Thus it had proven with Clifton. One of the officers of the prison, who was impressed with Clifton's intellect and manly traits of character, interceded, through the warden of the prison, the Governor for Clifton's pardon. After receiving a reply similar to that which the Governor had made to Mr. Stanley, the officer thoughtlessly told Clifton, and from that time all hopes he had formerly entertained of executive clemency were banished.

Nearly two years had passed, and Clifton had



received very few letters, and was permitted to write once in three months and then only to his immediate family. What business he transacted with Mr. Stanley was through his wife or his mother. They did not visit Clifton as they were expecting him to be released, every month thinking the time one month nearer. Mr. Stanley did not tell them of the Governor's decision, but had told Mr. Bolton and Mr. Burton and had earnestly requested them not to inform Clifton's family, as his mother had been quite feeble during all this time and he felt that she could not survive the shock.

Claude Bolton had been very successful in the management of Clifton's affairs, and regularly paid to Mrs. Steadman one-half of the net proceeds of the business; but by request of Lallie, the portion that was due her he invested.

A few days after Mr. Bolton had rendered his last settlement with Mrs. Steadman he called at her home, but found that she had gone out to Mr. Stanley's where she was to remain several days.



This was one of the many calls he had made during the time he had been attending to their business.

Lallie and Mrs. Steadman were always glad to see him. In fact they had almost isolated themselves from society. Mrs. Steadman was in very feeble health and Lallie had no heart for gayeties ; and Claude's genial, honest face brought sunshine with it and cheered their lonely lives. He was a welcome visitor.

Long before Lallie's marriage Claude had been one of her most ardent admirers, but had never received any encouragement and had never told his love. It made his heart ache to see her drooping and downcast, and as Time, the healer of all sorrows, brought tranquility to her heart, the love that he had long cherished gained pre-eminence and was beyond his control. His first thought when he found Mrs. Steadman was not at home, was to leave immediately, but Lallie, who had learned to look upon him as a brother, insisted that he should be seated. It would have been



rude to have refused, especially as she had intimated that she wished to talk to him on business.

“Mr. Bolton,” said Lallie, “I wish to tell you how very kind I think you have been to me. You have manifested great interest in my business and in my welfare. My own brother could not have been more thoughtful of my happiness and welfare. I have often spoken to mother of this, and she, too, esteems you very highly.”

“Well, Lallie, I am indeed grateful to you for your estimation of me, and your appreciation of my kindness is an ample compensation for its bestowal. I ask no more.”

“What I have expressed is only a small portion of what I feel. I very much regret that I cannot be more demonstrative; but I am not by nature demonstrative, and I am sometimes silent when duty demands expression, but knowing me as you do, I feel assured you will not take my silence as evidence against my esteem. The business I wish to speak to you about is in reference to Mr. Steadman. My father has informed me



that Mr. Stanley is now hopeless of his reprieve. Can you tell me anything about it?"

"Yes; I am informed by Mr. Stanley that the Governor has positively refused to take any action upon Clifton's case. Mr. Stanley has been to Edgewood and also to the capital, but has effected nothing, and he told me that he considered it a hopeless case. But I am sorry you have learned this, and it was not my intention to tell you; but since you have been informed of it by your father, I hope that I can be pardoned for having said anything about it."

"Then, Mr. Bolton, you wished to keep me in ignorance of all this?"

"Why should I not? I would have kept you ignorant of any intelligence that might afflict you."

"Well, Mr. Bolton, I have never considered it wise to feed the sad heart upon hopes that could never be realized. We are told 'the apprehension of the good gives but the greater feeling of the worst,' and again that 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' There is nothing that relates to the



human heart any truer than this, so I should have esteemed it a great favor had you told me, and I cannot consider that Mr. Stanley has treated me right in pampering me upon false hopes."

"Our silence may not have seemed wise to you, but it was the import of our warmest affection and solicitude."

"Mr. Bolton, I would not have you infer that I regard your action as any want of esteem, but it is my opinion that it was not the best. How can we become reconciled to an inevitable fate, if we are made to believe that it is not inevitable. When the heart is not cheated into vain hopes, and is made to feel that it must yield resignation, then begins its noble work and it becomes inured to its fate."

"There appears to be a great deal of philosophy in your deductions, yet I had never reasoned the matter from that standpoint."

"I have for several months been entirely without hope of Mr. Steadman's reprieve, and as far as it has been possible I have tried to banish him from my thoughts."



“Lallie, since you have taught me to believe that keeping one in ignorance of what they shall sooner or later realize, is wrong, I feel free to say that I am sure you will never see Clifton a free man again.”

Mr. Bolton was silent. He believed that Clifton would never be liberated. Would it be an injustice to his friend for him to marry Lallie—to console and comfort her and shield her from harm. He hesitated—love gained the victory, and, having made his decision, he was ready to stand by it to the last.

“Mr. Bolton, why are you silent?”

“I was thinking. You have confessed that I have been a warm friend to you, therefore I have a right to expect that you would pardon me should I unintentionally give offense. I have something I wish to tell you, but I cannot venture to do so without your consent.”

“How could you expect me to consent without knowing what it is; but knowing you are my friend and a gentleman, you are at liberty to tell me.”



“It is this: I love you, and, loving you as I do, I wish to have the right to shield you from the world’s cold formality. You can make my life happy.”

“Mr. Bolton, you really shock me. I am not prepared for the consideration of an offer of marriage, though it is made by one whom I have known and esteemed from my earliest childhood.”

“I may appear premature, but my affection for you has assumed such immensity that I trust when it is wholly revealed I shall have no occasion to apologize. Why, Lallie, I have loved you almost from your infancy. You cannot so soon forget how I loved you before you even met Clifton. I never told you in words that I loved you, because you had not the friendship for me then that you have now. When I heard that you and Mr. Steadman were to be married I was surprised beyond expression. Not only surprised, but I was deprived of the brightest hopes of my life. And now, if it be my privilege to do so, I ask you to consider this proffer of my affection.”



“ Mr. Bolton, I feel that it would be an unpardonable desecration to the love I plighted Mr. Steadman to consider this offer of your heart in any way with success to your wishes. With all the shame and disgrace that rests upon him I love him still.”

“ Lallie, I ‘would rather be a toad and feed upon the vapors of a dungeon;’ I would rather be banished forever to some uninhabited isle; I would rather, yea, rather, choose the pain of death than to give offense to that heart that has been so burdened and mangled. It gives me pain to tell you, but the love you cherish for another is vain and useless. ’Tis as vain as seeking to recall the forms and phantasies of love’s young dream. You are hugging to your heart a sorrow that, like a ravenous vulture, is preying upon the vitals of your life, which might bless the life of him that’s thirsting for it. While I see you thus wasting this precious love, oh, let me come and bathe my aching heart ere the fountain of thy love has been exhausted upon one it can never bless or comfort.”



“O, Mr. Bolton! I sympathize with you and esteem you highly. How could you appreciate the love of a heart like mine that has been so torn and so sadly broken?”

“I would heal it and warm it into life again. I should strive to soothe its anguish and teach you to forget every pain you have ever felt, and make you happy in my love. Now, tell me that you will consider what I have said; I will treat you kindly, a mother could not love her only babe more tenderly than I love you, most noble woman!”

“I would not act with inconsistency to Mr. Steadman, I would not be false to him, nor do I wish to be unkind to you. I am convinced that you love me; but O, I cannot tell you that I love you! I have a feeling for you that I cannot very well describe, but I cannot call it love; it may be only a very warm appreciation of your kindness.”

“I must leave you now, but before I go tell me I can be permitted to hope for a careful consideration of the proffer of my affection, and for



your final decision as soon as you may be able to reach it with justice to us both."

"It is not my wish to cause you any suspense, and I will say that I will answer if I can when we meet again, provided it be not within the next day or two."

"May God bless you, noble woman, and may he direct you in your answer. Good-bye. This has been a pleasant meeting to me, and I hope it may be my good fortune to repeat it soon."

Mr. Bolton left the house and walked hurriedly on his return to the store.

After he had gone some distance from the house he saw Mr. Burton approaching, but did not meet him. Mr. Burton entered the house and found Lallie crying. He was greatly disturbed, and said: "Lallie, my child, why are you weeping? Have you heard any bad news? I saw Mr. Bolton leaving just as I was approaching; he has been with you some time, I guess, as I waited at the store quite awhile, and as he did not come concluded I would postpone my business with him



till to-morrow. Ernest told me he came here on business with Mrs. Steadman; now I know that Mr. Bolton has told you something unpleasant. Is it anything in reference to your business affairs?"

"Father, I do not wish to evade you, but I would rather not answer your question."

"Well, my child, I demand that you tell me. It is my duty to advise and protect you."

"It is only this. He told me that he loved me, and asked me to marry him."

"Well, my daughter, I know of no man more worthy to command your affection than Claude Bolton, and I do not believe you will be so blinded to your best interests as to reject his offer. He is one of the best business men I ever knew in my life, and indeed a noble, generous gentleman. While I do not consider it my duty to make matches for my children, my affection and deep interest in their welfare gives me the right to advise them."

"Father, to accept of Mr. Bolton's affection



would be inconstancy to Mr. Steadman, would it not?"

"Is it possible, my child, that your affection still clings to that criminal? Do you hesitate to banish him from your thoughts? I am informed by good authority that Mr. Steadman will never be liberated. So you must become reconciled. His father is a drunken tramp, wandering about the country defrauding whom he can. He has deserted a sacred post of duty and deserted his family; none of them know anything of his whereabouts. These are things that you know to be true; then tell me, can you afford to sacrifice the dignity of our family, and to sacrifice your womanhood to let Clifton Steadman or any of his family talk to you about inconstancy. I am proud of my aristocracy, and when I think that a child of mine would set such small value upon our name as to love a criminal in preference to a gentleman my very blood burns with humiliation. I have been charitable with you in your love for Mr. Steadman. I have been silent when it was my duty to have



condemned. Now, must I sacrifice my affection for you, and my pride of ancestry, and remain silent. For God's sake, and for your own, awake to your sense of duty. I only wish to present the facts to you and let you act for yourself. I want to assure you that I have not been instrumental in the offer Mr. Bolton has made you. I have never mentioned his name to you as an acceptable suitor until now. You know him as well as I do, and since I have performed my duty as a father in advising you I leave you to decide for yourself."

"Father, you seem to misunderstand me. I did not say that I had not nor could not consider Mr. Bolton's offer of marriage."

"You admitted as much, my child, when you asked, would it not be an evidence of inconsistency to Mr. Steadman? You need only to be taught that the vain and useless hope that you cherish for his reprieve will never be realized. You have been made to believe that he will return to you. This I consider very wrong, for when disaster stands within our path 'tis useless to paint



it as a blessing, for when it is to be met we are horrified. Such condolence I never offer to those I find hopelessly afflicted, or even momentarily aggrieved. I seek to present their misfortune in its true likeness, and when it is met the heart, by its anticipation, has learned something of resignation."

"Well, father, this is substantially my view. When any one is able to convince me that my constancy to the love of Mr. Steadman is vain or wrong then I shall experience no regret in banishing him from my thoughts. As to Mr. Bolton, I know of no man I would rather love, or who would be more thoughtful of me. He has been a dear, good friend, and I trust God will bless him."

"Yes, with his tender love you will be happier than you ever have been. The affliction through which you have passed will serve to enhance the joys that his kindness will give. Now, my dear daughter, as a kind and affectionate father—one who has your interest at heart—can I not persuade you to awake to your duty. I am not attempting



to persuade you to love anyone, but I do most earnestly entreat you to never think of that murderer, Clifton Steadman, again. Mr. Bolton has told you that he loves you, and you may believe him for he is a man too honest and high-minded to tamper with a woman's affections; and do not, my child, display your weakness for Clifton to him."

"Father, I shall promise you nothing but that I shall think seriously of your advice, for I know there can be no selfish motive that actuates you in giving it, you have only my best interest at heart. I have been so greatly afflicted with sorrow that I must say I feel that I need a counselor and comforter. I shall deal honestly with Mr. Bolton, and shall strive to deal justly with myself."

"Lallie, I am happy to know that I have in a measure brought you to a realization of your duty. I shall be better satisfied when I know that you have given your heart to Mr. Bolton, for I know he will comfort and heal it. I must leave you now, my child, and I trust I have accomplished



something for your good. When Mrs. Steadman returns, your mother and myself would be glad to have you visit us. You have certainly relieved me of a great mental burden, and you shall live to experience what a wise decision you have reached."

Mr. Burton left the house and drove away, leaving Lallie all alone to meditate.

After he father had passed out of sight she returned to her room and began a consideration of her situation. She soliloquized thus :

"Does it become my duty to forget Clifton, though I shall never see him again? Is it possible that I can ever forget my dear husband, who has always loved me so dearly and who loves me still? Is it possible that Claude Bolton really loves me? He tells me that he does. What right have I to doubt him? He has proved a dear, good friend, and I can love him if I ever love at all again. It seems hard for me to realize that it is my duty to forget Mr. Steadman, though I have promised to try."

She was halting between two opinions; she did



not want to prove untrue to Clifton, and she did not want to cling to his memory if it was a reproach upon herself and family.

She finally decided that she would seek an interview with Mr. Stanley, and if he really thought that Clifton could never be pardoned she would sever her allegiance to him.

Mr. Burton fully realized that he had accomplished his intentions, that is, to teach Lallie to discard the affection she cherished for Clifton. Mr. Burton called upon Mr. Stanley for the purpose of persuading him to tell Lallie the entire truth about Clifton. He was willing for Mrs. Steadman to be kept ignorant, but he wanted his daughter to know all, and he told Mr. Stanley that he had told Lallie, but wanted him to tell her also. Mr. Stanley agreed to do so. In a few days Mr. Stanley was invited to Lallie's house, and he then revealed the whole truth to her, and told her that he would advise her to cherish no further hope of Clifton's reprieve.

“ I have exhausted every means known to our



profession to effect Mr. Steadman's reprieve, and all my efforts have resulted in defeat," said Mr. Stanley.

"I have great confidence in your integrity, Mr. Stanley, and I wish you to tell me just what you think of this. I do not want your sympathy to prompt you to withhold any information from me, no matter how disastrous you may consider it. I am tired of being kept in hopes of what appears to be hopeless. And I do not think you have done right to deceive me as you have."

"I only speak for myself when I say that I have not attempted to deceive you, nor any one else interested in Mr. Steadman's welfare. The motive that prompted my silence was a true paternal affection for those so grievously afflicted by his misfortune, and I can assure you that I am very sorry that my position has been so misunderstood."

"Mr. Stanley, I did not intend to give you offense when I said I had been deceived, and when I consider the feeling which prompted you and others to keep me ignorant of the true situation



and nature of my distress I accept their course as a most gracious kindness and I certainly implore your forgiveness for having spoken harshly."

"Lallie, you have no occasion to apologize. I take no offense when none is intended. I could not so far forget myself as to give sorrow and to a lady, and especially one I regard so highly as yourself. I feel that I have acted somewhat unwisely in keeping you ignorant of Mr. Steadman's prospects for a reprieve, and, since you request it, I will tell you. It is my candid opinion that he will never be favored with a reprieve. The Governor has positively refused to extend executive clemency even in the nature of a commutation of sentence. So I would advise you to file an application for divorce, as I think it would be expected from your friends, and I will be glad to represent you in the petition. Your claims for a divorce would be valid and granted at once upon sufficient proof of Mr. Steadman's conviction, which can be had from the records of the criminal court at Edgewood."



“Mr. Stanley, I hardly know what I should do. I do not want to act with any disrespect to Mr. Steadman, and I do not want you to incur public ridicule or act without any show of pride for myself and my family.”

“Well, I have advised as fully as I feel it my duty and I wish to say that this advice is offered without any disrespect to Clifton. I do not believe he is guilty nor could I be made to believe it, but it is impossible to produce any evidence that even so much as justifies a request for pardon. This is his misfortune, and our misfortune, and we must make the best of it.”

These words of Mr. Stanley's, together with the influence that had been brought to bear upon her by her parents, and the tender and earnest pleadings of Claude Bolton had almost persuaded Lallie to believe that she had committed a crime to manifest any affection for Clifton. She was almost persuaded to give him up; yet she felt that his name was dear to her, with all the shame and disgrace that now rested upon it.



She felt that life had no charms for her; all seemed darkness and gloom, not one ray of sunshine to penetrate the darkness. When Mr. Bolton asked her to become his wife she could not endure the thoughts of marriage. Although she had been entreated by her parents to accept him, it was a hard matter for her to determine what was best to be done. She felt that the kindness of Mr. Bolton had awakened a feeling that could be nurtured till it assumed the proportions of love. Should she conquer this feeling or let it take its course?



## CHAPTER XV.

“Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,  
And men below, and saints above;  
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.”

PRIDE and duty may prescribe a course for love, but neither can conquer or even weaken its ardor. This is more noticeable in woman. When once her heart has been awakened by love, it may be made to manifest an estrangement that some would term forgetfulness. Her filial affection and obedience may constrain her to concealment, but the image of him whom she first loved can never be entirely banished from her memory.

The gay and happy throng in which Lallie once moved had lost all of its attraction for her. The smile that plays upon her cheek gives no luster to her eyes, and her love for solitude all indicate that her love cannot be conquered.

Lallie had been made to believe that it was a



reproach to herself and family to cling to Mr. Steadman's affection; Claude Bolton told her that he was satisfied that Clifton could never be reprieved, and Lallie had accepted it as her fate.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton were also exerting every influence in their power to cause Lallie to abandon the hope of ever seeing Clifton again; they had pictured to her the disgrace it was to ever think of living with him again. They tearfully entreated her to make application for a divorce, and to accept the offer Mr. Bolton had made her.

Several weeks had passed since Mr. Bolton proposed, but Lallie could not make up her mind to accept him. Mrs. Steadman returned from Mrs. Stanley's and immediately went to the country to spend several weeks with her sister, Mrs. Gladwell, and Lallie went to spend the time with her parents.

Mrs. Steadman soon decided to give up her home in the city and make her home in the country with her sister. Lallie could not live alone, so their home was sold and she returned to her



parents. She was then fully under the influence of her parents and in a short time they persuaded her to file an application for a divorce, and then to consent to marry Mr. Bolton. They wished even the marriage to be kept secret from Mrs. Steadman, who felt the coolness that they had manifested towards her, and would not be likely to visit them. They had tried to be kind to her, but the hostility they felt for her and Clifton was so great that they could not conceal it. They must do what they could to redeem their child's name and uphold their family standing.

They were gratified when Lallie regained some of her old-time buoyancy of spirit, and did all in their power to promote her happiness. At the close of a few weeks she told her mother that she had promised Mr. Bolton to marry him. Her only proviso was that the marriage should be a very quiet one.

Lallie persuaded herself that she loved Claude, although there was ever present with her a consciousness of something lacking. Mr. Bolton had



plead earnestly for her love, and felt satisfied with the feeling she manifested for him, for he knew that by nature she was not demonstrative.

The marriage was to be very quiet. Only their immediate families, the Stanleys, and the minister's family were invited. The bridal trousseau was quite elegant and stylish, but very subdued in tone and color.

Upon the day appointed for the marriage Mr. Bolton called to see Lallie. She kept him waiting in the reception room for some time, and when she made her appearance her manner was so formal and cool that Claude was astonished. He was silent for a few minutes and then exclaimed :

“ Why, Lallie, what troubles you? Are you not glad to see me ? ”

She raised her handkerchief to her eyes, and burying her face within her hands, wept as though her heart would break. Mr. Bolton arose from his chair, and kneeling beside her, gently took her hand.

“ Precious Lallie, you shock me. Tell me, I



implore, why you weep so bitterly. The anticipation of what this day would bring has made me truly happy ; but to see you weeping when I had expected to see you smiling, gives me grave apprehensions."

"Mr. Bolton, forgive me." Here she burst into a flood of tears and could not continue.

"Tell me what I shall forgive. Tell me why you weep, and let me mingle my tears with yours?"

"Oh, Mr. Bolton, how can I bear to tell you? Why had I not died before I came to this. If I am worthy will you forgive me when I tell you that I do not love you ; and ask you to release me from my promise to marry you. I am sorry that I promised to marry you ; not that I do not consider you worthy of my affection, but that I feel that I can never love you as I should to become your wife."

"Do you regard me a child or imbecile? Am I to be betrayed and humiliated. I feel that I have deserved a more kindly fate. If you do not



love me I do not wish to marry you. Is it possible that I am deceived in one whom I regard the purest of the pure. It is a late hour to tell me that you do not love me. The arrangements for our marriage have all been made, and what will my friends and family think if it is not to be. I do not see how you are to retrieve this wrong you have done me. I deserve no such treatment at your hands. I have been a friend to you, and I have loved you with all the devotion of an honest heart. Woman, fair but treacherous, tell me what you mean?"

Lallie was silent for a few minutes. She was moved by his suffering, and knew that she could make him happy. Clifton was beyond her reach. Why make another miserable, and also bear the reproach of her own family. She had regained her tranquility and calmly replied:

"Mr. Bolton, forgive me; I did not mean to say that I did not love you."

"Then tell me why you wished to be released from your obligations to me. Tell me why you



permitted me to believe that you loved me, and why you promised to marry me? If this is the reward for my affections I shall bid you adieu, hoping that I will never see your face again."

He arose to leave her, but she called to him, saying:

"Mr. Bolton, do not leave me; I would not afflict you. I can explain my feeling, I hope, and yet prove myself true to you. When I came in my thoughts inadvertantly turned to the day I married Mr. Steadman, and I was so overcome with emotion that I spoke as I did. It was in this very room we met upon that day, and could you for a moment assume the feelings I had, I would not be so bewildered to explain myself. Don't you know I could not be so heartless as to really mean what I have said."

"It is extremely painful to me to have you refer to this at this hour, and I feel that you do not love me or you would have no forebodings of unhappiness. I leave the matter entirely with you, and I advise you ere it is too late to tell me



candidly if you really love me, and if you think you will be happy in my affection; if so I will proceed with the marriage, if not I will tell our friends that we will not be married to-night, and refer them to you for the reason."

"Mr. Bolton, I am at a loss to explain my feelings; I could not be so unkind as to subject you to such humiliation. I do love you or I would not have permitted you to believe that I did, and the momentary feeling that seized and so completely subdued me can be forgiven if it be possible for you to appreciate my peculiar position. No, I could not be so forgetful of your kindness to me as to intentionally accept your affection, and at the last moment cast it ruthlessly away, bringing humiliation that no act of my future life could redress. I have promised to become your wife and have prepared to marry you to-night; so, if it be possible for you to forgive me, I wish you to proceed with the marriage."

"I can readily forgive you with this explanation, and hope that by my kindness and affection I



may be able to make you happy. I wish you to feel that your course is no disrespect to Mr. Steadman. I know that you will at times have sad thoughts, but when you have resolved to do your duty, you will find it will give you happiness. His misfortune should not spoil our lives. We have done all for him that could be done, and to forever brood over what is irreparable would not be wise. I only appreciate you the more to know how reluctantly you relinquish your affection for him, but since you have done this, and since you have given me your heart, I feel that its devotion should be mine; and loving you so tenderly, I readily forgive your momentary forebodings, and ask you to lean now upon me. I shall strive to shelter you from all the pitiless storms of sorrow."

Lallie did not love Mr. Bolton, as was plainly evinced by this demonstration. She had been so influenced by the eloquence of his wooing and by her parents, that she had promised to marry him. She could not endure to subject him to the mortification that it would give to refuse to marry him at



this late hour, so she had to confess that she loved him, or sacrifice her integrity and womanhood. She had a feeling for him so warm in its nature, which had been produced by his great kindness to her, that she had recognized it as love. Having discovered her mistake she determined to make the best of it.

The marriage took place that night at the residence of Mr. Burton. Lallie having made her decision stood by it, and the most critical could not have found fault with her demeanor, and Mr. and Mrs. Burton congratulated themselves upon their good management.

Clifton Steadman and his mother were kept ignorant of the marriage, through the kindness of their friends, but several weeks after it had taken place, Mrs. Steadman saw a description of it in an old paper, which her sister overlooked and failed to destroy. She knew that Clifton would hear of it some time, and decided that she could break it to him more carefully than anyone else. So she immediately wrote her son the sad intelligence.



Imagine his grief! Had his death warrant been read to him it could not have given him more anguish than the knowledge of his adored wife being untrue to him.

The last ray of hope that had so long shone upon his wretched life was now gone. He had been sustained by the hope of reprieve and the thought that with all the world's bitter frowns that there was one true to him, but now she, too, had deserted him. Forsaken and forgotten, disgraced and in prison, he felt that death was preferable to his lot. But, those who sorrow most, if their sorrow is not the outgrowth of their own sin, shall receive the brightest crown and the richest reward.







## CHAPTER XVI.

TIME rolled on, and nothing was accomplished in Clifton's behalf. His fate seemed to be inevitably fixed—that he was to drag out a miserable existence within the prison walls.

Mr. Bolton had been strictly honest in his settlements with Mrs. Steadman, and she had an income that was sufficient for all comforts and many luxuries. She always kept money on deposit at the prison so that Clifton could purchase whatever conveniences or luxuries he was allowed to indulge in. She took Lallie's marriage very hard, but did not censure her, for she knew only too well the influence that had been used to bring it about. She was still doing all that her willing hands found to do, and was to her sister and family a never failing source of comfort.

Happiness and prosperity fell to the lot of Claude Bolton. He now had the means of his



wife at his command, and under his management the business had already been largely increased, and he bade fair in a few years to rank among the millionaires.

While Lallie did not love him she made him happy in the belief that she did. There was a secret sorrow that preyed heavily upon her heart. She had lost much of the animation that had made her so attractive, and her beauty was gradually fading; but this change was so gradual that those who saw her every day did not perceive it. If asked how she felt, her answer invariably was, "Quite well." She spent a large portion of her time reading and visiting the sick, and did many kind acts for the poor and unfortunate. She did all in her power to make those around her happy, and in so doing was happier herself.

Mr. Bolton, stimulated by the success he had achieved in business, redoubled his efforts, and seemed ever to have his mind burdened with speculations. Under such heavy strain his constitution, which was never strong, gave way. He



had never complained, and Lallie could not realize that his health was badly impaired until the crisis came.

One day early in the spring Mr. Bolton came home during business hours. This was so unusual that Lallie hastened to meet him. As he entered the house she observed the deadly pallor of his countenance and exclaimed:

“Oh, Claude! What is it? Are you sick?”

“Yes, dear. I shall have to lie down as soon as possible; but do not be uneasy about me. This faintness will soon wear off.”

“I hope it will; but you must see a physician. I will send for dear old Dr. Brown; he is so successful and wise he will soon have you well. But first let me assist you to bed.” She saw that he was comfortable and immediately sent a servant for the doctor.

When she returned to the bedside of her husband he was so still she thought he was asleep, but he opened his eyes, smiled, and said:

“Dear little wife, I am better already. If you



will only stay near me I will go to sleep."

"Never fear that I will leave you, dear; my post of duty is at your side."

He seemed to sleep again, and when Dr. Brown came had to be aroused. The good old doctor looked solemn after examining his patient. When he left the room Lallie followed him, and begged to know his opinion of Mr. Bolton's condition.

"Mrs. Bolton, I am very sorry I cannot give you a more encouraging report; but Mr. Bolton is in imminent danger. It will require close watching and skillful treatment to bring him back to health. His nerves are shattered and he is completely prostrated, and he must have perfect quietude. I will consult with the most eminent physician in the city, and we will see that all that skill can do shall be done. Do not lose hope, Mr. Bolton's case is not necessarily fatal, and I hope to be able to restore him in a few weeks." With these few words of encouragement he hurried away.

Truly poor Lallie's cup of sorrow was full to



the brim, but, like the brave little woman she had ever been, stood firmly at the post of duty and watched and comforted her husband through his long illness.

He grew gradually worse, and all the skill of the physicians and the prayers of loved ones could not turn the white-winged messenger away.

Through all of Claude's sickness he had refused to allow Lallie to leave him.

Two weeks from the time Claude took his bed, as the glory of the setting sun departed and the shades of evening were gathering, the spirit of Claude Bolton took its flight. His last words were to his beloved wife, and his last look was upon her whom he loved above all others.

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there.  
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,  
But has one vacant chair.”

“There is no death. What seems so is transition.  
This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
Whose portal we call death.”







## CHAPTER XVII.

THE beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Bolton so young and yet twice a widow, was beginning to droop under her many sorrows. During the few months that she was associated with Mr. Bolton she had learned to regard him with an affection that was loyal and tender, but there was ever present with her a feeling of injustice to Clifton, and this caused her to regret the loss of poor Claude less than could have been expected.

The early spring had advanced, and all the flowers were in full bloom, but still the roses did not return to Lallie's cheeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton were ever watchful of their daughter's health, and determined to take her to a celebrated watering-place. When Mr. Burton spoke of going Lallie manifested no interest, but said :

“My dear father, I do not care to go any-



where, but if you think it best I will go. I want to get well and strong, and be able to show you and mother that I appreciate your untiring kindness and sympathy."

"Well, have your things all packed to-day and we will get off on the early train in the morning."

"So soon as that, father?"

"Yes, my child, there is no use in making extensive preparations; we can purchase anything we may need in New York or Philadelphia, for we will not be too far from them to do so."

"Well, father, I will be ready," assented Lallie, sadly. Her father's enthusiasm had failed to awaken her interest in their anticipated trip.

On the following morning Mr. and Mrs. Burton and Lallie took their departure.

Since the death of Mr. Bolton Ernest Burton had been in full control of the large business. While Ernest did not possess the executive ability of his predecessor he had received a thorough business education, and was fully competent to keep the business running smoothly. He had assumed



the responsibility of his father's family during his absence, and with the assistance of the excellent old housekeeper and their well-trained servants he had very little trouble. The younger children were at school, and in the evening all met for their usual pastime games, music, and lively repartee.

Happy children, gather ye the roses, and garner the sunshine ; be happy while you may.

One evening after they had finished their games and there was a momentary lull in the conversation, Mary said :

“ Ernest, I have been thinking about Clifton to-day. You know he used to join in our romps, and was always so kind-hearted and good to everybody. I cannot believe he killed that man out in the West. Can you ? ”

“ No, I do not believe it. Clifton is as innocent of that crime as I am. ”

“ And I don't b'lieve it, either, ” said Joe.

Little Arthur was silent, and seemed to be thinking.

“ What do you think, Arthur ? ” enquired Joe.



“Well, I just think we ought to go out there and break that prison door down, and bring Clifton home.”

All were amused at this, but as Arthur was so earnest they would not laugh at him.

“I believe that Clifton will be cleared some time,” said Mary, “and then Lallie will be like her old self again.”

“I wish,” said Arthur, “that mamma, papa and Lallie would come home.”

Just then Mrs. Smith, the kind old housekeeper, made her appearance, and called out, “Bed-time, children; we’ve had fun enough for one evening.”

The tired little ones were very well satisfied to retire to rest, and Ernest, who goes early to business, is also ready to woo balmy sleep.

Spring passed, and lovely summer, with her luscious fruits and profuse foliage, was at hand, and still Lallie had improved very little. She had intended to exclude herself from society entirely, but that is almost impossible at a fashionable



watering-place. The gay society about her sometimes entertained, but much oftener wearied her. The subject of her thoughts was far away in prison.

“Will he forgive me? Can he forgive me?” were questions that constantly presented themselves to her mind.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast.”

Unconsciously she was sustained by the hope of Clifton's reprieve, when she was trying to teach her heart that there was no hope.

When the June roses faded she begged her parents to take her home, but they feared the consequences, and proposed to travel for a while. Lallie perceptibly brightened when this was mentioned, thus betraying her secret. She thought that her parents might be persuaded to go West, and she would be allowed to visit Clifton.

Mr. Burton felt that it was useless to try to restore a lost hope, and after traveling for several weeks went home.

At first Lallie seemed to improve, but soon returned to the same listless state. She asked to



be allowed to visit Mrs. Steadman, and much to her surprise her wish was granted. Her parents thought she would not be with them long, and they could not deny her anything. Arrangements were made for her to go at once.

Imagine Mrs. Steadman's surprise when Lallie and Ernest drove up to the gate. She ran out to meet them, exclaiming :

“Why, Lallie, is it possible that you have come to see me at last?”

Yes, mother, I have been longing to see you and could not be satisfied to stay away.”

“Come in, you must lie down—you look so tired and weak. Come in, Ernest.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Steadman; I would gladly do so, but have business engagements that cannot be delayed. I will come back for Lallie.”

“No, do not send for her. I will send her home when she is ready to go. I want her to stay as long as she will. Am sorry that you cannot come in.”

She took Lallie to her own cool room. It was



large and airy, and through the open windows the delicate perfume of the white honeysuckle was borne. Lallie removed her hat and gloves and at Mrs. Steadman's earnest solicitation took the reclining chair and made herself very comfortable.

"Now, mother, first of all, tell me about dear Clifton. I cannot hear anything from him."

"He is well and keeps up a brave heart. Your marriage was a sad blow to him, but I explained to him, as well as I could, the circumstances and he has borne up wonderfully. I will give you his last letter to read."

When Lallie finished reading the letter large tears were streaming down her cheeks and she was so overcome with emotion that she could not speak. After she became more composed she said ;

"Mother, do you think Clifton can ever forgive me for marrying Mr. Bolton?"

"His love has never changed and his magnanimity knows no bounds. This is my day for writing to him, and if you would like you can write also."



“I will be so glad to write. I will begin now.”

After the letters were dispatched they had luncheon and took a stroll in the woods.

The next morning Mrs. Steadman proposed sending for Lallie's wardrobe and keeping her several weeks in the country. To this she readily assented. Her greatest pleasure was talking about Clifton, and no one could enter into her feelings as fully as Mrs. Steadman.

In due course of time an answer to their letters came and Lallie felt that a heavy load had been lifted from her heart. Clifton still loved her and had forgiven her. She spent long hours rambling through the woods with the Gladwell children, or sought some favorite nook, “where, in bowers builded by nature's hand, inlaid with flowers and roofed with ivy, on the mossy seats, reclining,” she indulged fond hopes or whiled away the hours in sweet converse with old books.

Lallie was much happier than she had been since the day that Clifton first bade her farewell at their cottage gate, but she could not subdue the



longing to be with her first and only true love.

When the time came for her to leave the country she was reluctant to do so, but knew that it would not do to remain longer. When she left she promised to return at an early day.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton were pleased to find Lallie so much improved. She was so much stronger that she soon fell into the old routine of family pleasures and duties.

Thus the summer passed. The blue veils of of Indian summer float about, seeming to hold the sunlight imprisoned as in chains. Still she sees no prospects of her fond hopes being realized.

Autumn comes—

“The mellow year is hast’ning to a close ;  
The little birds have almost said their last ;  
Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—  
That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows ;—  
The patient beauty of the scentless rose,  
Oft with the morn’s hoar crystal, quaintly glassed,  
Hangs a pale mourner for the summer past,  
And makes a little summer where it grows.”







## CHAPTER XVIII.

NEARLY three years had dragged by their weary course since Lallie parted from Clifton and almost a year had elapsed since poor Claude Bolton had been laid to rest.

This day seemed to Lallie peculiarly sad.

“Give sorrow words, the grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o’er fraught heart and bids it break.”

“Is there no real happiness in this life? I, who have wealth and every luxury, but money cannot drive away the dark clouds that overshadow my young life. No money can purchase peace and happiness. Are human hearts ever broken twice?” Ah, “love of woman surpassing all words, sorrow of woman beyond all tears.”

She had loved him better than her own life, and yet he was taken from her.

At such moments, when her heart seemed too full for utterance, it found voice in music, and on



this occasion, as on many others, she found consolation at her piano. As the sweet, sad strains of Mendelssohn's "Song Without Words" were borne upon the breeze, she was conscious of some one entering the room. As she arose from the piano the servant announced Mr. Stanley. He advanced and greeted her with a warm grasp of the hand. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Stanley. Be seated."

"Thanks; I liked the piece you were playing so well that I waited at the door to hear some of its sweet strains. I would ask you to repeat it, but I came to bring you glad tidings."

"Glad tidings? Is it—about Clifton?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"Yes, Lallie, it is of Clifton. *He is innocent!*"

"Oh, I am so thankful! These tears of joy show my gratitude. I knew that he was innocent; but can they prove it?"

"Yes. Here is a letter from Judge Palmer. I will read you. You will perceive from it that he will be cleared." He then read the following:



EDGEWOOD, November 4th, 18—.

MR. L. C. STANLEY, Gunville.

*My Dear Sir:*—Yesterday morning Mr. Gordon, your assistant counsel in the Steadman case, came to my office in company with a man claiming to be the father of Clifton Steadman, who was convicted for a term of ninety-nine years in the State's prison for the murder of a Mr. Clayton. The man has just been dismissed from the lunatic asylum. He appears perfectly sane, and has made a statement that appears so clear that I cannot help believing that you should be advised of it.

Enclosed you will find this man's statement in full.

I am sir, yours truly and respectfully,

J. L. PALMER,  
Judge of District Court.

“I will now read you the confession of Clifton's father, written by his own hand, and sworn to and subscribed before a notary public,” remarked Mr. Stanley, after having read the letter from Judge Palmer.



## WILLIAM G. STEADMAN'S CONFESSION.

My name is William G. Steadman. I am the father of Clifton Steadman, who has been convicted for the murder of Albert Clayton.

I came to Edgewood about four years and a half ago, as a tramp, and was given employment by Mr. Clayton, for whom I was working as hostler when my son Clifton was brought to Mr. Clayton's stable and introduced to him by Claude Bolton. Standing just outside of Mr. Clayton's office when this introduction took place I recognized this Clifton Steadman to be my son.

The team he hired from Mr. Clayton to drive out and look at the land and herds north of Edgewood had been made my special charge. Mr. Clayton consented to let him have this team, although he never let them even to his most intimate friends.

My son told him he would be responsible for any damage done them while in his service. Then I was ordered by Mr. Clayton to harness them. My son was out all day with them and when he



returned in the evening, one of the horses, Chester by name, was limping.

Mr. Clayton was very much incensed when he saw it, and demanded of my son a forfeit of three hundred and fifty dollars for the horse. After some bitter and insulting words from Mr. Clayton my son paid the money, but threatened to have the worth of it in revenge. My son then left the stable and was soon followed by Mr. Clayton. I lost sight of Clifton, but followed Mr. Clayton to the postoffice, and demanded my son's money. When he refused I became so enraged that I murdered him.

The money I took from Mr. Clayton's person was soon spent for whiskey. I drank to such an extent that I had delirium tremens, which resulted in insanity. It was my intention to give the money back to my son the next day and tell him who I was. I knew the horse was lame when I took him from the stall, but I cannot tell why I denied it unless it was that I feared by taking sides with a stranger Mr. Clayton might question



the cause, for I knew that he would not believe me if I told him that the horse was lame. One of the men who worked in the stable with me saw the stranger give me a coin and had I denied that the horse was lame this man would have told Mr. Clayton that it was because the stranger had given me the coin. I once had large possessions, which I lost by going the security of a friend, and this loss drove me to drink, which caused me to drift so low that I deserted my family and assume the name of William G. Proctor, but was only known as Old Prock while I worked for Mr. Clayton. I have discovered since my release from the asylum that my son has been convicted for the murder of Clayton, which I committed, and for which I am now ready to answer, though it be death.

God has by His reclaiming grace brought me to repentance and my son shall not suffer for an offense which I committed. I make affidavit and swear that this statement and confession is substantially true.

WILLIAM G. STEADMAN,

*Alias* WM. G. PROCTOR, *alias* OLD PROCK.



When Mr. Stanley had concluded the reading of this confession Lallie could scarcely control herself, and, after many expressions of joy, said :

“Will my dear Clifton come home right away? Will he be here within a week, do you suppose?”

“No, he will not be released so soon as that. I will go out to Mrs. Gladwell's this afternoon and tell Mrs. Steadman, and to-morrow I will leave for Edgewood.”

“It will be such a relief to Mrs. Steadman to know that Clifton will come home. But will they not convict his father?”

“He will be arrested. I suppose he is now under arrest. He will be tried, but I will acquit him on the plea of insanity, which I think I can establish without any difficulty.”

“Mr. Stanley, do you really believe that they will release Clifton upon his father's confession?”

“Why, certainly they will, when they have sufficient proof and identification.”

“Do go at once and let mother know that she shall yet be happy.”



“Yes, I will; I have no time to delay.”

“Mr. Stanley, God never made a nobler man than you. You have indeed been a friend to Clifton, to his mother and father and to myself. What a happy world we would have if all men were like you, Clifton and my father.”

“Thank you for the compliment. While I feel that I do not merit such estimation as you put upon me, I appreciate it, because I know I have done all I could and will continue to do so. The approval of one's own conscience upon his life affords a joy that is well worth striving for. Now do not become impatient, all will be well in the end.”

Mr. Stanley left the house and drove hurriedly out to Mr. Gladwell's.

The next morning he left for Edgewood, and when he arrived there he learned that Mr. Steadman had been arrested. Mr. Gordon, Judge Palmer and a number of their friends accompanied him to the jail, and the Sheriff brought Mr. Steadman out to see if he would recognize Mr. Stanley



in the crowd which stood inside the jail. As soon as he had passed out of the door of his cell, before the Sheriff had time to ask him anything, he ran to Mr. Stanley and grasped his hand exclaiming: "Lawrence, did you ever think I would have come to this? I have been a demon and am not worthy of your notice, still less worthy of your friendship." Wiping the tears that were dropping fast from his eyes, he continued:

"But with all my sin God has forgiven me, and I trust that he will yet allot me sufficient time to redeem in a measure the wretched life I have spent, and to heal the hearts I have broken since I saw you last."

"Mr. Steadman, with all your sin I forgive you, because I know that you have been, and will yet be, a man worthy of the confidence and esteem of the best and truest."

Mr. Stanley knew this was sufficient to satisfy the sheriff that he knew the prisoner, and turning to him asked if he would allow the gentlemen to retire, and concede him the privilege of a few mo-



ments conversation with Mr. Steadman, to which the sheriff consented.

The men all left, followed by the sheriff and turnkey, who closed and locked the heavy door at the bottom of the stairway.

After a long conversation, in which Clifton's trouble, his marriage, and his great success in business, and the plans and details of the defense which he was to make upon Mr. Steadman's case, he returned to the hotel to take a few hour's rest.

He then took Mr. Steadman's affidavit, and that of all who were instrumental in the conviction of Clifton, and forwarded them to the Governor, who sent Clifton's reprieve to the warden of the prison and notified Mr. Stanley of it.

Mr. Steadman's confession had caused the grand jury to indict him for murder, and as it was yet a few days before the convening of the criminal court in which Mr. Steadman would be tried, Mr. Stanley went to the prison to see Clifton on business, and to rejoice with him in his liberation. After bidding him farewell and God speed he re-



turned to Edgewood to prepare for Mr. Steadman's defense.

Clifton Steadman was now a free man, and when he alighted from the train at Gunville he was overwhelmed by conflicting emotions. He had much to be thankful for, yet there was much to regret. He was free, but his father was a prisoner; and Lallie, his first, true and only love, was not his wife; but he must see her at once, yet he dreaded the meeting. Mr. Stanley had written Lallie that Clifton would be home that day, so she was expecting him. Every noise she heard startled her, and every time the door-bell rang and he did not come her excitement increased. The train was delayed and he was late, but at last her weary vigilance was rewarded. He did not wait to be invited in, but hurried to the drawing room where he felt sure Lallie would be.

“Lallie!”

“Clifton! O, Clifton, at last you are here!”

She threw her arms around his neck, and as he clasped his arms around her, and drew her to his



breast, imprinting a kiss upon her pale lips, he said:

“My own precious wife!”

All differences were forgotten. All the suffering and misery obliterated.

There were many questions to be asked and answered, and an hour slipped by all too soon.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton came in and congratulated Clifton and extended him an invitation to remain with them that night.

“We will be glad to have you remain,” added Mrs. Burton.

“Thank you, mother; but late as it is I must go to the country to-night. There is one waiting and watching for me who must not be disappointed.”

He kissed Lallie good-bye and gave Mrs. Burton a warm grasp of the hand. Mr. Burton followed him to the door and told him that he had consulted a lawyer and ascertained that he would have to marry Lallie again before she would be legally his wife.



“Yes, I understand. Mr. Stanley advised the same course. I will arrange for a quiet marriage to-morrow, if it will suit you and Mrs. Burton.”

“It will suit us any time. Bring Mrs. Steadman with you. We will only have the two families.”

“Thank you and good night.”

As Clifton had expected his mother was waiting for him. Her joy was beyond words.

The next day the marriage was consummated and immediately Clifton set to work to get his business in order. In so doing he discovered that Mr. Lapell's finances were in a condition for his father to regain all the money he had lost by him very nearly five years ago.

In a few days the good news came flashing over the wires:

*William G. Steadman is cleared!*

Mr. Lapell knew he would have this old debt to pay, and he preferred doing so without going through the usual process of law. This he did,



paying the money over to Clifton. With this money Clifton redeemed their old home and furniture, and preserved as much of the old home appearance and magnificence as possible.

The merry Christmas was near at hand, and Clifton and Lallie worked hard to have everything in readiness to celebrate it at the old homestead.

Mr. Steadman came on Christmas eve, and was welcomed by his loving wife, Clifton and Lallie.

They had suffered much, but peace, happiness and prosperity was their reward.

“This might serve to teach us that there are misfortunes clothed with dignity and sorrows that are crowned with grandeur. As the same bright sky smiles above the ruin as smiles above the perfect structure, so the same beneficent Providence bends above our shattered and our answered prayers.”

[THE END.]



















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**BIRMINGHAM, ALA.**







WE CAN RECOMMEND  
OUR READERS TO  
**SIMPSON BROS.**  
AS THE MOST  
*Popular Clothiers*  
IN THE CITY OF  
**BIRMINGHAM**

*They have one of the finest and best selected stock of Clothing and Gents' Furnishing Goods in the City. Give them a call and you will be convinced for yourself.*

**SIMPSON BROS.**

*One Price Clothiers*

*13 N. Twentieth Street.*

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**HAND-MADE SHOES**

**1928 Second Ave.**

**BIRMINGHAM, ALA.**



Carry with them the assurance of superior workmanship. That's what it should do. I know my goods to be the best—my customers so consider them. I exercise great care in buying as well as selling in order to please all.

I never wish shoes to leave my store unless they are perfection in style and workmanship as well as fit.

If you are in need of Hand - Sewed or Machine - Sewed Shoes, give me a call and you will get perfect satisfaction in variety, style and price.

I wholesale and retail. Mail orders carefully attended to. I carry also a nice line of Hosiery and Handkerchiefs.


**C. H. FRANCIS**







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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTICE**

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IN TIME THIS WORK WILL BE SUC-  
CEDED BY THE AUTHOR'S ABLEST EF-  
FORT, "THE PERSECUTOR AND THE  
PERSECUTED' OR, LIFE'S INFERNO."

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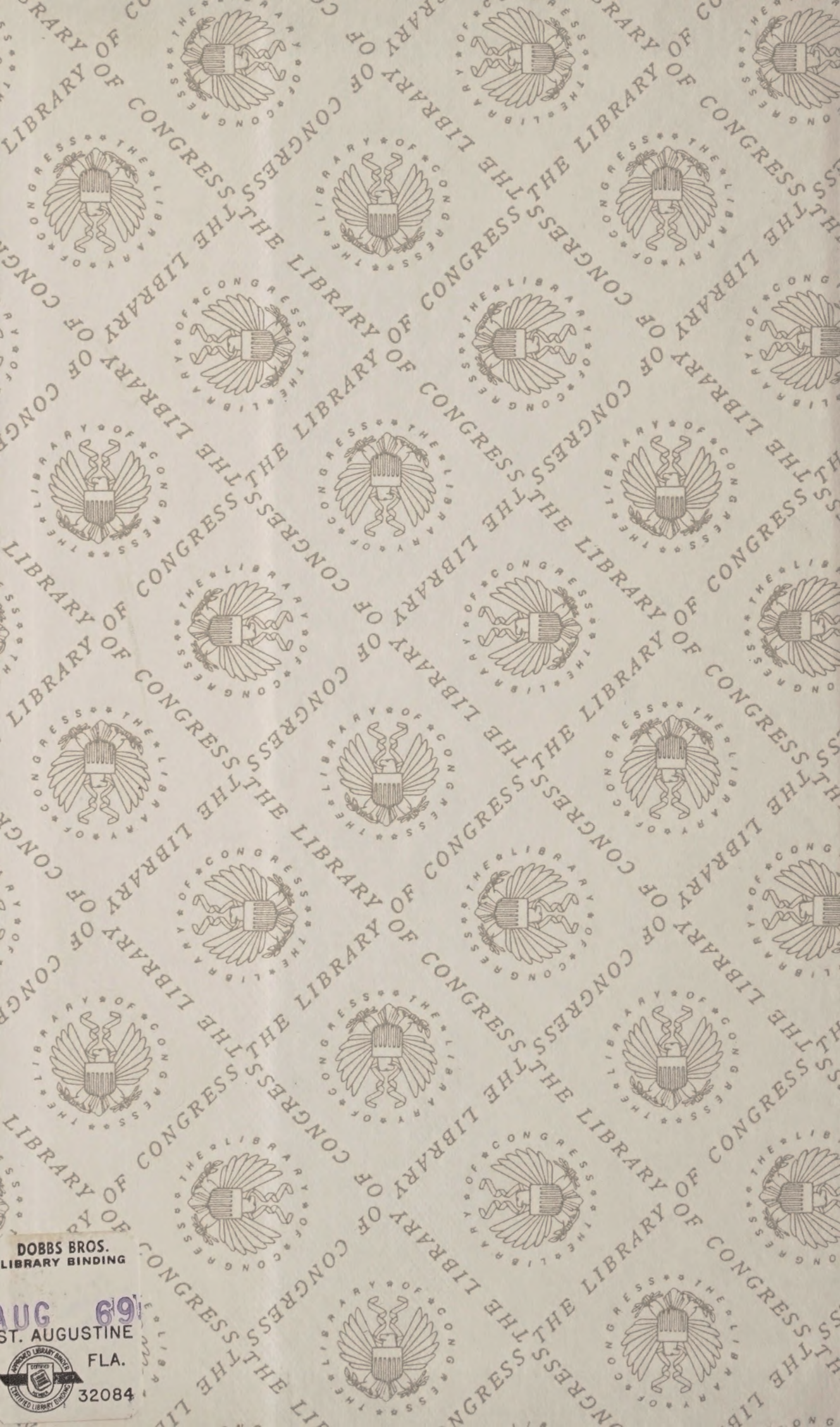






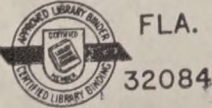






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